# CONTROVERSY OVER DHARMAKĀYA IN INDO-TIBETAN BUDDHISM: AN HISTORICAL-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA CHAPTER 8 AND ITS COMMENTARIES IN RELATION TO THE LARGE PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRA AND THE YOGĀCĀRA TRADITION

by

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This work is dedicated to the forgotten people of Tibet, hidden away under the yoke of a brutal oppression, who passed on to the world their most precious possession: their ancient cultivation of wisdom and love. May the world someday learn to repay them for it.

# CONTENTS

Chapter VII. (Continued)

# ABSTRACT

## CONTROVERSY OVER DHARMAKĀYA IN INDO-TIBETAN BUDDHISM: AN HISTORICAL-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA CHAPTER 8 AND ITS COMMENTARIES IN RELATION TO THE LARGE PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRA AND THE YOGĀCĀRA TRADITION

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The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, a foundational Mahāyāna text ascribed to Maitreyanātha, became one of the most popular treatises in late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. It purports to summarize all the yogic practices and realizations (*abhisamaya*) of Buddhism. Its eighth and final chapter describes the realization of *Dharmakāya*, a Buddha's enlightenment, in terms of multiple *buddhakāyas* (literally "Buddha bodies," a Buddha's modes of being and function).

By the late 8th century CE in India, however, a disagreement developed over the meaning of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* eighth chapter on buddhahood (in particular whether three or four *buddhakāyas* were intended) and that disagreement has continued even up to the present day, carried on by different Indo-Tibetan interpretive traditions. The controversy has operated on two hermeneutic levels. Scholars disagreed over the proper philological interpretation. But more importantly, they

used the text as a point of departure to disagree on the proper way to conceive and express the enlightenment of a Buddha.

The first eight chapters of this dissertation use source criticism, redaction criticism, comparative, and philological methods to determine the literary sources and composite structure of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8. This analysis demonstrates that the author intended three (and not four) *buddhakāyas*, and also accounts for unique peculiarities in the expression of the text (e.g. the fact that it defines *svābhāvikakāya* in terms of *buddhadharmas* and *sāmbhogikakāya* in terms of marks and signs for the first time in Indian literature). Comparative analysis of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and Yogācāra texts sheds new light on the morphologies and semantics of the *kāya* terms.

Chapters nine through twelve of the dissertation trace the continuum of debate over *buddhakāyas* in India and Tibet, and show how an unresolved paradox in the theoretical foundation of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*) underlay the controversy at each historical stage. The opposing positions of Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra are elucidated, the diverse views of later Indian scholars (Buddhajñānapāda, Dharmamitra, Prajñākaramati, Buddhaśrījñāna, Kumāraśrībhadra, Ratnākaraśānti, and Abhayākaragupta), and the opposing buddhologies of two eminent Tibetan scholars (Tsong kha pa, and Go ram pa).

# PREFACE

Buddhahood (*buddhatvam, buddhatā*), the state of full enlightenment which a Buddha is supposed to have achieved, was important to all traditions of Buddhism, and particularly important to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Throughout the history of Buddhism in Asia, persons have formally entered the Buddhist religion, and reaffirmed their faith, through the ceremony for taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. At the very door of entry into the Buddhist religion, then, stands the question: what qualities of a Buddha are a source of refuge? The same question, of course, is also asked of the latter two refuges. With reference to the Buddha refuge, the answer in various Abhidharma texts was that a Buddhist takes refuge not in all qualities of a Buddha (for example, not in his physical body) but in the mental qualities which make him a Buddha (*buddhakārakadharmāḥ*), his very essence. Hence, even the identity of a Buddhist (qua Buddhist) came to stand in logical relation to the essence of buddhahood, a Buddhist being one who takes refuge in that essence (as well as in Dharma and Sangha similarly analyzed). This is discussed in Chapter 2 below.

Mahāyāna Buddhism was the tradition of Indian Buddhism which became dominant in the so-called "Northern Buddhist countries," including Tibet. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, buddhahood was fundamental not only as an object of refuge, but also as the ultimate goal of spiritual practice. The concept of *bodhicitta*, (the mind of enlightenment) was a

basic distinguishing feature of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, in whose texts *bodhicitta* was defined as the desire to attain buddhahood (the enlightenment of a Buddha) for the sake of all other beings. Buddhahood, then, as the ultimate goal of religious practice, was the raison d'etre of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, at least as we encounter it in its literary expressions. And it continued to be so for the Mahāyāna Buddhism of Tibet, which inherited its understanding of *bodhicitta* from India.

Thus, theories as to what constituted buddhahood (referred to in modern scholarship as "buddhology") were well represented in Indo-Tibetan textual traditions. One Indian text in particular, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (*Ornament of Realizations*) became a primary source of buddhological theory for late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, its 8th chapter comprising an explication of buddhahood in terms of multiple "*buddhakāyas*" (literally, "Buddha bodies," a Buddha's modes of being and function). But by the late 8th century CE, a disagreement developed in India over the meaning of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter, and that disagreement has continued even up to the present day, carried on by traditions of Tibetan interpretation which follow different Indian sources.

What is the disagreement about? Some Indian and Tibetan exegetes claimed that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter taught three *buddhakāyas*, while others claimed that it taught four (what *buddhakāyas* are, of course, will be discussed at length in the body of the dissertation below). On the face of it, the disagreement would appear to be a trivial, philological discussion, with no great import for our understanding of the

history of Mahāyāna thought, a quibbling over the interpretation of a few abstruse words of one particular text. And this is what many traditional Tibetan scholars, and modern scholars, now believe.

When I began the research for this dissertation, I also believed that. In fact, I chose the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter as the focus of my research in the mistaken belief that it would be a relatively simple and managable object of study. There are numerous Indian and Tibetan commentaries on it (twenty-one extant Indian commentaries, hundreds of Tibetan commentaries), most of which have been little examined in modern scholarship (at least as regards their exegisis of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter). The 8th chapter is very short (making it easy to survey the relevant portions of its many commentaries). And it has had enormous significance in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism as a primary textual source of buddhological theory. Short, simple, with great traditional significance and a plethora of previously uninvestigated commentaries to consult - *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 seemed the perfect textual basis for a dissertation! As for the ancient disagreement on whether it taught three or four *buddhakāyas* , I assumed (in line with the monastic manuals current in Tibetan scholarship) that the disagreement was a trivial philological matter.

As my research into the literary and historical context of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra and its commentaries progressed, however, it became increasingly apparent that the controversy over its *kāya* teaching concerned far more substantive issues than has generally been supposed. The major Indian and early Tibetan commentators had disagreed over the

text not just because its language was plausibly ambiguous, but more importantly, because the frames of reference which they brought to the text were significantly different.

What first tipped me off to this was the fact that principal Indian disputants (such as Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta) did not restrict their arguments concerning the meaning of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* merely to the text itself, but made their arguments by reference to the entire textual tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism (including both the traditions of Sūtra and Tantra). They clearly interpreted the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, not in philological isolation, but as a textual expression of a model of buddhahood shared throughout the sūtra/śāstra tradition of Indian Mahāyāna. Gradually, as research progressed, it became apparent that those (like Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta) who defended a tri-*kāya* interpretation of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 were attempting to preserve a basic concept of enlightenment formulated in early Indian Mahāyāna literature: enlightenment as an undifferentiated yogic realization of ultimate reality, inaccessible to conceptualization. This concept appeared in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* as the theory of "*dharmakāya*" or "*tathāgatakāya*," and in the major Yogācāra śāstras through their tri-*kāya* theory (as it centered on *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*). It was also preserved in the works of important Madhyamaka scholars such as Ārya Vimuktisena (early 6th century) and Candrakīrti (early seventh century). Contrary to this, Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation was a late 8th century logico-Mādhyamikan analysis of enlightenment, which represented an attempt to

make buddhahood as non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*), i.e. as a state traditionally declared to be both unconditioned and conditioned, logically coherent (i.e. accessible to conceptualization and logic). The debates which ensued in India and Tibet between those who followed Ārya Vimuktisena's or Haribhadra's interpretation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* represented not merely a philological disagreement over the purport of its verses, but a substantive disagreement over the nature of a Buddha's gnostic realization and the proper perspective from which to comprehend and express it (the perspective of non-dual yoga, or the perspective of logical analysis). *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8, then, merely provided the textual foundation, based upon which a substantive disagreement over enlightenment was expressed.

The discernment of this pattern naturally raised the following question, which guided the next stage of research. Why, out of all the early Mahāyāna śāstras, should *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 be the one to provide the textual basis for such a controversy? The attempt to answer this required the application of historical-critical and comparative textual methods, and the results were interesting. It became evident that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* descriptions of buddhahood were unique in Indian Mahāyāna literature, because they represented an attempt to homologize (to draw a correspondence between) two antecedent textual traditions on buddhahood: that of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* and that of the Yogācāra (tri-*kāya*) śāstras. *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 comprised a mapping of Yogācāra buddhology onto the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, thereby forming a unique new buddhological expression, sufficiently

ambiguous to serve as the perfect textual basis for later hermeneutic disagreements.

In sum, then, my research became an inquiry as to why so many scholars through the ages had had such an enthusiastic disagreement over what appeared (and was generally understood by present scholars) to have been such a trivial, philological matter: the number of *buddhakāyas* taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter. That inquiry led to the discovery that the disagreement was not trivial, but substantive, and that it centered on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* because of the unique ambiguities which that particular text provided. That led to further historical-critical and comparative textual research to discover why *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 comprised such a unique expression of buddhahood in Indian Mahāyāna literature. And that involved research into the expressions of buddhahood common in textual traditions antecedent to and contemporaneous with the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*..

That summarizes the chronology of the research, but this work presents the findings according to the chronology of history. It therefore begins with textual traditions antecedent to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and arrives (in its final chapter) at later stages of controversy in Tibet.

Scholars of Sino-Japanese Buddhism may wonder why I have not said more below about Hsuan tsang's *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* and Bandhuprabha's *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa*, texts which became so important in China, and in which a *buddhakāya* theory similar in some ways to Haribhadra's (although not identical) was espoused. There are several reasons for this. It seems likely that the sort of concerns which

Haribhadra expressed in his interpretation of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 had developed in India over a period of time prior to Haribhadra (this is discussed in portions of chapters 10-12 below). One of Haribhadra's primary concerns, in my view, was to make logical sense of the foundational Mahāyāna theory of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (the state of a Buddha which early Mahāyāna texts characterized as both unconditioned and active in the conditioned world), by logically distinguishing unconditioned and conditioned elements of a Buddha's gnostic realization. Haribhadra did this by means of a Mādhyamikan type of logical analysis. Something similar to it was also apparently done through a Yogācāra logical analysis by Dharmapāla (6th century) upon whom Hsuan tsang based his *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* and Bandhuprabha significant portions of his *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa* (see Poussin, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, pp. 703-716, 789-791; Keenan, "A Study of the *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa*," 304 ff., 364 ff.). But for reasons which I do not know, the theory of *sva-sāmbhogikakāya* and *para-sāmbhogikakāya* which appears in Hsuan tsang's and Bandhuprabha's texts in China did not play a significant role either in later Indian Buddhism (from Hsuan tsang's time onward) or Tibet. The theory is rarely even mentioned in later Indian or Tibetan Buddhist texts (one rare example is Atiśa's 11th century *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary which mentions a *sva*-- and *para-sāmbhogikakāya* [Pk 5201, fol. 106-4-7] without giving any explanation of them).

Since there has been a clear continuity of controversy on the theory of multiple *buddhakāyas* in India and Tibet which can be studied through

commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, and since the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-Prajñāpāramitā* tradition became one of the most prominent traditions of buddhological discussion in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, it seemed worthwhile to focus my research on that controversy. Nevertheless, the work presented here may be seen as preliminary to many areas of future research, not the least of which would be an historical study to try to determine why the theory of *sva-* and *para-sāmbhogikakāya* (ascribed to Dharmapāla) became so prominent in China, while being (apparently) insignificant for later Indian and Tibetan traditions, and, at the same time, to investigate historical reasons for the areas of commonality found in Haribhadra's *kāya* theory.

In preparation for writing this thesis, besides examining the Indian *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentaries, I read through a number of works by Tibetan commentators of the dGe lugs and Sa skya sects. Without question commentaries composed many centuries and a culture removed from the original Indian sources must be read with a critical eye. But it is equally true that major Tibetan commentators have raised possibilities of interpretation for late Indian texts which modern scholars do well to consider. Because Tibetan scholarship represents a continuation of late Indian Buddhist scholastic traditions, the best Tibetan scholars often perceived a range and depth of meaning in Indian Buddhist textual expressions which a modern scholar, even an excellent one, might never see without reference to their writings. Decisions of how to interpret the Indian texts had to be my own, but, in many cases, I would never have found myself in a position to decide without months spent examining and

comparing what some of the great Tibetan scholars had thought, particularly Tsong kha pa, gYag ston, and Go ram pa (scholars who, it should be noted, sometimes differed very significantly among themselves; cf. chapter 12 below).

I had originally intended to write half of this dissertation on Indian textual traditions and half on later Tibetan interpretations. As it turned out, however, all but one of the following chapters focus on Indian textual traditions, where I only occasionally refer explicitly to Tibetan commentaries. The reason for this is that, having spent months reading Indian and Tibetan materials, I found that philological considerations (raised mainly by the extant Sanskrit literature) as well as historical-critical and comparative considerations (based more on Indian than Tibetan sources) came to play an increasingly central role in my understanding of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and the stages of controversy over its 8th chapter. At the same time, however, as just mentioned, my overall ability to understand the Indian texts, and to perceive a range of semantic possibilities in them, had been enhanced immeasurably by having familiarized myself with the differing opinions of Tibetan commentators. The real debt that I owe to the Tibetan commentators, then, is of this general kind, which can not be specifically annotated in chapters where I am discussing the Indian texts on their own terms. Therefore I must acknowledge it here.

In the chapters which follow, I present many quotations in English which were translated from primary Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. These translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

There is one other experience connected with this work which I thought should be shared. As mentioned above, Tibetan commentators sometimes differed significantly with each other over interpretations of Indian texts. At the beginning of my research, this appeared to make things difficult (it would have been so much simpler to take notice of a single Tibetan perspective when faced with ambiguities in Indian commentaries). Somewhat to my surprise, during the course of my work, I found that it was precisely the areas of disagreement among Tibetan scholars which became most helpful to me, for they raised different possibilities of meaning in Indian texts which forced me to think much harder about them, and thereby to understand more. I appreciated both Tsong kha pa and Go ram pa, for example, far more for having read some of both, than I ever could have by reading either one alone. The great scholars of Tibet were always at their best precisely when they were challenged, and their traditions are therefore carried on, in the best sense, by those who welcome open and honest inquiry, inquiry of a sort which does not stop at sectarian boundaries. Thankfully, every sect of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as Bon, still contains such open-hearted men and women, with the Dalai Lama himself as a beacon. Through my research for this dissertation, then, I began to gain a more deepfelt respect for the diversity of traditions in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, not in spite of, but precisely because of the fact that they have not always agreed. And from this also came greater respect for the diversity of Asian traditions, and finally, for all the great philosophical and religious traditions of the world, through which men and women have struggled honestly, and often

against great adversity, to seek profound sources of goodness and truth. To such men and women everywhere through the ages, including those who even now (as in Tibet) find themselves forgotten in prisons and torture chambers, I am grateful.

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The bulk of my research was conducted with the help of two men. Geshe Thubten Tsering, with whom I studied Tsong kha pa's Legs bshad gser 'phreng and other Tibetan and Indian commentaries, passed away the year after I left India. He was as fine a teacher, and man, as I have ever had the privilege to know (East or West), and the embodiment of the highest principles of the texts which he taught. The loss of such a man is unfathomable to me, and my heart goes out to all of his students at the Tibetan Institute and elsewhere who will miss him terribly. The Venerable Migmar Tsering, Sa skya expert at the Tibetan Institute, patiently helped me to study the commentaries of Go ram pa and other great Sa skya masters over a period of many months. His brilliant and incisive responses to my many questions helped my research immeasurably, for which I am grateful.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ABHISAMAYĀLAMKĀRA CHAPTER 8 AND THE STAGES OF CONTROVERSY OVER IT

## 1. The Significance of Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8 as an Exposition of Buddhahood in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*[1] (*Ornament of Realizations*) is an Indian Sanskrit commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* which was ascribed by late Indian scholars to the legendary figure Maitreya (the future Buddha). It was probably composed some time from the fourth to the early sixth century C.E.[2] It is a synoptic, extremely condensed, versified commentary which purports to summarize all of the meditative practices

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[1] The full name of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is: "*Abhisamayālaṃkāra-prajñāpāramitā-upadeśa-śāstra,*" "*The Ornament of Realizations, a Treatise of Instruction on the Perfection of Wisdom.*" It will be abbreviated: "*AA*." The abbreviation here for the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* will be "*PP*."

[2] Haribhadra (c. 770-810 CE) was the first to ascribe the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (abbreviated "*AA*") to Maitreya. He did so in his two principal commentaries on the *AA*, the *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārtha* (Wogihara, p. 1, Amano, 1975, p.2). He claimed that Asanga and Vasubandhu wrote commentaries on the *AA*, although these have never been found. If true, the *AA* was composed by the fourth century C.E. The first commentary extant in any language is Ārya Vimuktisena's (ca. early sixth century). If this was the first commentary, it would put the *AA's* terminus ad quem in the early sixth century. The textual history and date of the *AA* is discussed in more detail in chapter 7 below.

and yogic realizations leading to the different types of Buddhist enlightenment which were implicitly taught in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*.[3] Its 8th and final substantive chapter, entitled "*Dharmakāya*" ("Body of *Dharma*," vss. 1.4 and 1.17, or "*Dharmakāyaphalam*," "Resultant Body of *Dharma*," vs. 9.2) describes buddhahood (the state of a Buddha), the ultimate Mahāyāna realization of full enlightenment (*samyaksaṃbodhi*), the achievement of one who has completed all of the practices described in the prior seven chapters.[4] The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter describes the modes under which buddhahood exists and manifests: the multiple Buddha *kāyas* (Buddha "bodies"). In conjunction with the Buddha *kāyas*, the chapter elaborates the mental and physical qualities traditionally associated with a Buddha (the undefiled Buddha *dharmas*, the marks and signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*) and the extensive activities of a Buddha to assist other beings in the world (*buddhakarma*).

For reasons which modern scholars can only speculate upon, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (abbreviated henceforth "*AA*") became one of the most popular and commented upon texts in late Indian and Tibetan

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3 The content of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, its structure, and its relation to the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7 below. The *AA* is an extremely condensed text, purporting to summarize all the yogic practices and realizations of Buddhism, yet taking up only 27 folio sides in the Tibetan Tripitika (Pk 5184).

4 The last verse of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* names its final topic: "*dharmakāyaphalam*," "the resultant *dharmakāya*," meaning the entire state of buddhahood. In Ārya Vimuktisena's *AA Vṛtti* (Peking 5185, fols. 100-3-7) the *AA's* final chapter is called: "*chos kyi sku'i skabs bslab pa'i 'bras bu'i leu*," "The *Dharmakāya* Section, the Chapter on the Result of the Trainings" ("bras bu" = "phalam"). In Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārtha* (Amano, 1975, p. 262) the AA's final chapter is called "*Dharmakāyabhisambodha*," "The Complete Realization of the *Dharmakāya*."

Buddhism. Twenty-one Indian commentaries on this one text are extant (most are now only available in Tibetan translation in the Tibetan Tripitika). And even more Indian commentaries may have been composed which are no longer extant.[5] The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, as a verse text embedded within Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, was translated into Tibetan in the 8th century C.E. by Vidyākaraprabhava and dPal brtsegs. It was then retranslated (both as embedded within the *Sphuṭārthā* and as a separate text) by Go mi 'chi med and bLo ldan shes rab in the 11th century.[6] It became enormously popular in Tibet, where literally hundreds of commentaries upon it were composed. Perhaps because it lent itself better to Madhyamaka interpretation than other synoptic Indian texts on Buddhist practice (Madhyamaka thought having dominated Tibetan exegisis), the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its commentaries were chosen by Tibetan scholars as primary Indian textual sources for Buddhist yogic theory, and for the normative description of buddhahood in non-Tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism. In fact, within the great monastic universities of Lhasa, commentaries upon the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* have comprised one of the most fundamental subjects of monastic study.[7] The

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[5] Haribhadra mentions commentaries by Asanga and Vasubandhu which are not extant in any language (*Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 1), and there may have been others written later which were not preserved in the Tibetan canon. The extant commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* are discussed in chapters 6 and 11 below.

[6] According to the colophons of the Tibetan translations of the *Sphuṭārthā* (Pk 5191, fol. 300-4 lines 5-6), and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (Pk 5184, fol. 8-3 line 3). The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was also translated into Tibetan (as embedded in Haribhadra's *Āloka*) by Subhaṣita, Rin chen bzang po, Atiśa, Dirapāla, and bLo ldan shes rab in the 11th century (Pk 5189, fol. 234-4 lines 4-7).

[7] The five basic areas of monastic study are *Tshad ma*, Buddhist epistemology and logic (based upon the treatises of Dharmakīrti and Dignāga), *dBu ma*, Madhyamaka thought (based mainly upon the treatises of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti), *Phar phyin*, the yogic

*Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* overall importance for the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition, then, can not be overestimated. It and its commentaries have continuously dominated exegesis in India and Tibet on the implicit meaning of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* for the past 1500 years (since the time of Ārya Vimuktisena, ca. early sixth century CE).

This had enormous consequences for the Tibetan understanding of Mahāyāna buddhology (Mahāyāna theories of buddhahood). For it meant that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter became one of the most important Indian textual sources for Tibetan thought on the nature of buddhahood. Even up to the present day, when one asks a traditional Tibetan scholar about the qualities of a Buddha, his answer is usually framed by reference to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter. Interestingly, as fundamental as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was to late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, it was never studied in China. And some of the incongruities between Indo-Tibetan concepts of buddhahood on the one hand, and Sino-Japanese concepts on the other, probably stem (in part) from that fact.

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practices and realizations implicitly taught in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* (based on Haribhadra's commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*), *mDzod*, Abhidharma (based mainly on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*), and *'Dul ba*, Vinaya (based on Gunaprabha's Vinaya commentary ). The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, its commentaries, and the monastic manuals on them (*yig chas*) are the focus of the third area of study above.

## 2. Stages of Controversy over Abhisamayālamkāra Chapter 8's Description of Buddhahood

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is extremely abbreviated and dense with possible meaning. In particular, the key verses which frame its 8th chapter on buddhahood were sufficiently ambiguous to permit different interpretations by Indian Buddhist scholars. And verses that were somewhat ambiguous in Sanskrit became even more ambiguous in their Tibetan translation, encouraging controversies over interpretation (which began in India) to continue in Tibet.

As noted above, the *AA's* 8th chapter describes buddhahood in terms of multiple Buddha *kāyas*. The fundamental sense of the Sanskrit word "*kāya*" is "body," meaning the physical form of a sentient being. As with the English word "body," a number of derivatory meanings also attached to the term. "*Kāya*" was often used to refer to a collection of things (i.e. "corpus"). It could refer to a substratum or basis of qualities. The term was also used (particularly in Mahāyāna Buddhist discussions of buddhahood) in such a way as to connote all three of these meanings at once. In Indian commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (those by Ārya Vimuktisena, Bhadanta Vimuktisena, Dharmamitra, Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta), and in various Indian Yogācāra commentaries, the word "*kāya*" in "*dharmakāya*" was generally etymologized in one or more of three ways:

1. *kāya* = *śarīra*: body or embodiment; e.g. "*dharmakāya*" = embodiment of *dharmatā*.

2. *kāya* = *āśraya*: substratum, support, basis; "*dharmakāya*" = the substratum of excellent qualities (the undefiled dharmas) or the basis of sovereignty over all phenomena (*sarvadharmāh*).

3. *kāya* = *saṃcaya*: collection or accumulation; "*dharmakāya*" = the collection of Buddha's excellent qualities, the collection of Buddha dharmas.

The term "*kāya*" in "*rūpakāya*," in both pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna texts, generally meant "*śarīra*," "body" or "physical form." Throughout what follows, the term "*kāya*," as a component of other terms such as "*dharmakāya*," "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," and "*nairmāṇikakāya*," will be glossed simply as "body." But the reader will be made aware of different nuances of meaning which are generated by different contexts of discussion.

The term "dharma" has a very broad semantic range in Buddhist texts: the truth (as encapsulated in the Four Noble Truths, or the two truths: *paramārtha satya* and *saṃvṛti satya*), the Buddha's expression of the truth (*āgama*), the gnostic realization of the truth (*adhigama*), excellent, pure qualities derived from that realization (*anāsravadharmāḥ*), the ultimate constituents (elements) comprising the psycho-physical world of beings (the *sarvadharmāḥ* of Abhidharma metaphysics), and other related meanings. In the chapters which follow, different senses of the term will be discussed as needed.

Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early 6th century), the first *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (*AA*) commentator whose work is extant, believed that the *AA's* 8th chapter was teaching three *kāyas* of a Buddha, using a terminology drawn from the (primarily Yogācārin) tri-*kāya* traditions of its period. Haribhadra (late 8th century) reinterpreted the *AA's* 8th chapter to be teaching four Buddha *kāyas*. It appears that Haribhadra's interpretation (and indeed his ascription of four *kāyas* to any such non-Tantric Buddhist text as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*) was initially controversial. Haribhadra's reputed disciple, Buddhajñānapāda (late 8th century), did not follow Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8. Dharmamitra, author of the first subcommentary on Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, wrote that some Indian scholars rejected the four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8, finding it impossible to believe that Haribhadra actually meant it as his own position. Gradually, however, Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 was accepted by a number of Indian scholars, notably Prajñākaramati (ca. 950-1000 C.E.), Buddhaśrījñāna (ca. 1200 C.E.), and Kumāraśrībhadra (date unknown). Other important Indian scholars, however, vehemently rejected Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* and argued for a return to Ārya Vimuktisena's three *kāya* view: Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE) and Abhayākaragupta (ca. 1100 CE).[8] Later in Tibet, the influential Sa skya scholar Go ram pa bsod nams senge ge (1429-1489) supported Ārya Vimuktisena in

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[8] These Indian scholars and their commentaries will be discussed in chapters 9-11 below.

asserting three *kāyas*, while Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419) and his followers backed Haribhadra's assertion of four.

Thus, if we take Haribhadra as its initiator, the debate over the number of Buddha *kāyas* taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* has continued for over 1200 years (from the late 8th century to the present), having progressed from the Indian to the Tibetan branch of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Sa skya and dGe lugs pa monk-scholars of the present day, living in the Tibetan refugee communities of South Asia, still disagree on the issue. Up to now the disagreement has never been resolved. And what (if any) broader significance this disagreement may have had regarding the Indo-Tibetan understandings of enlightenment has never been determined.

In spite of its age, most modern scholars of Buddhism are unaware that any such controversy ever existed. Obfuscating the issue is the fact that the initial pioneering work done on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* by the great Russian scholar E. Obermiller was based on commentaries by Haribhadra and by leading Tibetan scholars (primarily dGe lugs pa) who accepted Haribhadra's views (Tsong kha pa, rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen, Jam yang bshad pa, etc.). Most modern scholars who have referred to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* buddhology in their writings have followed Obermiller's lead in reading its 8th chapter exclusively through Haribhadra's eyes, reporting simply that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* teaches four Buddha *kāyas*.[9]

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[9] e.g. Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, p. 103; Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p.155; Poussin, *Siddhi*, pp. 790-791; Cf. Obermiller, *Analysis of the Abhisamayālamkāra*,

However, given the fact that there has indeed been an age-old controversy over the number of *kāyas* taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, some basic questions naturally arise. What has the controversy actually concerned? Has it been merely a philological disagreement over a few Sanskrit verses of that one text? If so, why didn't more traditional scholars simply conclude that the text was legitimately ambiguous, or that whether one asserts three or four *kāyas* didn't really matter? Why have so many major Indian and Tibetan scholars through the ages seen fit to take opposite sides so energetically? What was it about the number of *kāyas* taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* which was so important to them?

Any attempt to analyze the debate is complicated by the fact that it has been a diachronic discussion rather than a synchronic one. It has not been a discussion between two contemporaneous scholars. Rather it has been an ongoing interchange conducted over centuries, in which scholars of each period, attempting to address the philosophical and religious problems of their own time and place, have written responses to scholars of earlier periods. Developments in religious thought since the last response forced reconsideration of old questions in the light of new contexts. What was important to say about enlightenment, and what methods were used to analyze or describe it, changed somewhat from age to age and culture to culture.

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pp.11-12, "The Doctrine of Prajñā-pāramitā as exposed in the Abhisamayālaṃkāra of Maitreya," pp. 83-84. Nagao ("On the Theory of Buddha-Body," p. 43, n. 26) is more careful, noting that the verses of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* itself do not clearly teach four *kāyas*, although Haribhadra's *Āloka* interprets them as such.

If the historical perspective is lost, it becomes impossible to sort out what the whole debate has been about. One complicating factor is the abhorrence of orthodox scholiasts to give the appearance of personal innovation. From the perspective of Buddhist traditionalists, the truths of Buddhism were realized by Buddhas and saints (such as Maitreya) and then revealed by them in sacred scriptures. The commentator's job in explaining those scriptures was not to innovate, but to explain the meanings intended by their authors, since those meanings were truths realized by those authors. At some stage within the Buddhist tradition the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was taken to be such a sacred scripture (hence its ascription, by Haribhadra, to Maitreya).

Each commentator obeyed the unwritten rules of orthodoxy according to which the only way to reformulate the tradition they received was to read their reformulation into the texts they inherited. Scholars, like other people, do not work in a vacuum. They are conditioned by their historical and cultural context. Although commentators made interpretations of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* appropriate to their own times and places, they always did so under the rubric of explicating the original intentions of its author (supposedly Maitreya). Because of this, the debate over the number of *kāyas* took on the appearance of a trivial disagreement over the meaning of a few verses of one abstruse text. Although Haribhadra's reinterpretation of the *AA's* 8th chapter actually constituted a new theory of buddhahood (new at least for non-Tantric Buddhism), it was within the rules of orthodoxy, because he read his meaning into the

received text.[10] Therefore, those who later accepted Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 believed not that they were following a new theory of Haribhadra's, but rather that they were following Maitreya's meaning as it had been correctly interpreted by Haribhadra.

Therefore, the debate over the number of *kāyas*, examined diachronically, resolves into a number of different stages of discussion in which the issues at stake partially changed over time. Broadly speaking, I would describe those stages as follows: The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter represents an attempt, for the first time in Indian Buddhism, to homologize two semi-autonomous Mahāyāna descriptions of a Buddha's enlightenment: a *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* description and a tri-*kāya* Yogācāra śāstra description. In fact, *AA* chapter 8 represents a mapping of Yogācāra buddhological categories (the three *kāyas*) onto descriptions of enlightenment commonly found in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*.

Ārya Vimuktisena, I believe, recognized *AA* chapter 8 as precisely such a mapping. His commentary explicitly drew the relations between the *AA's* verses, the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, and the Yogācāra terminology. He demonstrated the way in which the author of the *AA* had matched the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra to the appropriate passages of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*. In doing so, he reiterated the basic Yogācāra understanding of enlightenment that had come to be reflected in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*: enlightenment as, in essence (*svābhāvikaḥ*), an

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[10] As far as we know, Haribhadra was the first to claim that the *AA* taught four *kāyas*.

experience of highest yogic realization, inconceivable to those who have not realized it, beyond discursiveness, unconditioned, and supramundane.

Haribhadra, writing several centuries later, felt compelled in his reading of *AA* chapter 8 to clarify the categories of multiple *kāyas* in a way consistent with the 8th century Buddhist logic and Madhyamaka thought of his time. The *AA's* key verses on the Buddha *kāyas*, when read in relation to the structure of the whole text, were not really all that ambiguous (they do in fact teach three *kāyas*, as we shall demonstrate later). But they were sufficiently ambiguous to permit Haribhadra to reinterpret them in conformance to his 8th century logical and Mādhyamikan agenda. Viewing enlightenment less as an inconceivable yogic realization and more as an object of logical analysis like any other object, he used his interpretation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* to separate out contradictory elements of a Buddha's realization (the unconditioned and the conditioned) and assign them to their appropriate domains, resulting in four Buddha *kāyas*. Later Indian scholars had a wide variety of reactions to Haribhadra's new interpretation, both positive and negative.

Later in Tibet, Sa-skya and dGe lugs scholars chose either Ārya Vimuktisena's or Haribhadra's view, depending on what implications for buddhology they saw for their project of developing an all-inclusive systematic philosophy and practice out of the thousands of sūtras and śāstras they had received from India. Within that systematic project, the Tibetan scholars perceived a number of problems as inter-related: problems concerning the two truths, the perfect knowledge of them

(which is enlightenment), and the description of that knowledge as "embodied" in Buddha *kāyas*. To analyze this 1200 year old controversy over the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter, then, requires that it be studied in each of its historical stages.[11]

Underlying the controversy, however, over the whole course of its history, has been a puzzle in Mahāyāna philosophy, a logical problem generated by the Mahāyāna theory of non-abiding nirvāṇa (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*). The theory of non-abiding nirvāṇa was fundamental to all developed Mahāyāna soteriology. In pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist theory, arhats (including Buddhas) who passed into final nirvāṇa (*nirupadhiśeṣa nirvāṇa*) passed entirely beyond the conditioned world of sentient beings. Final nirvāṇa represented an immortal (*amṛta*), unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) state which was utterly separate from the conditioned world. Logically, this posed no problems. The attainment of an unconditioned state entailed the complete abandonment of the conditioned state, the conditioned world of saṃsāra. But with the rise of the Mahāyāna tradition, the pre-Mahāyāna conception of final nirvāṇa (particularly as it applied to a Buddha) was fundamentally altered. For in the new Mahāyāna

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[11] The statements of these and the following paragraphs comprise the theses of this dissertation. The rest of the dissertation is intended to demonstrate them. Chapters 2-8 provide the historical and textual background needed to demonstrate that *AA* chapter 8 is indeed a three *kāya* text, though a unique one. For it represents a mapping (for the first time in Indian Buddhism) of Yogācāra categories onto *Prajñāpāramitā* textual material. Chapter 9 shows the way Ārya Vimuktisena elaborates this fact. Chapter 10 discusses the 8th century logical agenda which Haribhadra brought to the *AA*, resulting in a theory of four *kāyas* new to non-Tantric Buddhism which Haribhadra promulgated through his interpretation of *AA* 8. Chapter 11 traces later Indian scholarly reaction to what Haribhadra had done (including initial confusion and controversy over his theory, then later both support for it and rejection of it). Chapter 12 discusses the opposing views on *AA* 8 of two enormously influential Tibetan scholars: Tsong kha pa and Go ram pa.

soteriology, a Buddha was one who had attained an unconditioned state, and yet had not abandoned the conditioned world.

In Mahāyāna thought, a Buddha was one who had broken free of cyclic existence (saṃsāra) in such a way as to eternally assist all other beings to achieve their own liberations. This meant that a Buddha's nirvāṇa was unconditioned (personally freed from the causes of the conditioned world) and at the same time, conditioned (pervasively manifesting within the conditioned world to help other beings). A Buddha's nirvāṇa was therefore called a "non-abiding nirvāṇa ("*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*") because it was bound neither to the causal chain of cyclic existence, nor to the isolation of a quiescent (pre-Mahāyāna type) final nirvāṇa. Framed in terms of Mahāyāna gnoseology, a Buddha had passed beyond the conditioned world into an eternal epistemological oneness with the unconditioned (universal emptiness,the *dharmadhātu*), yet, simultaneously, he was fully aware of and active within the entire conditioned world. This meant that a Buddha had to be both unconditioned and operative within conditions. And this comprised an apparent paradox, one which was necessarily engendered by the leap from pre-Mahāyāna to Mahāyāna soteriology.

The original Yogācāra formulation of three *kāyas* was developed in relation to a number of other Mahāyāna models of enlightenment, one of which was this very theory of non-abiding nirvāṇa. In the Yogācāra tradition, the paradox generated by the theory of non-abiding nirvāṇa (the paradox of buddhahood being both unconditioned and conditioned) was not considered a logical problem. Rather, it was considered merely an

apparent problem, one which was to be resolved not by (futilely) attempting to logically analyze a Buddha's personal yogic realization, but by realizing it for onesself. For this reason, Yogācāra texts actually meant what they said when they claimed that buddhahood, in essence, was inconceivable (*acintya*), and to be known only through personal realization (*pratyātmavedanīya*). For the Yogācārans (and Mādhyamikans such as Candrakīrti who later adopted important elements of their three *kāya* model) a Buddha's gnosis was primarily an object of yogic realization, not of philosophical speculation. Upon the actual realization of buddhahood (the *dharmakāya*), what had earlier appeared paradoxical about a Buddha would no longer seem so.

Haribhadra (late 8th century) apparently believed that the paradox (of a Buddha being both conditioned and unconditioned) was simply the product of faulty logic, and was to be resolved through the logical-Mādhyamikan procedures of his time. His interpretation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* as a four *kāya* text, in part, represented his attempt to logically distinguish the unconditioned from the conditioned elements of a Buddha's gnostic realization (with reference to the two-truth ontology of Madhyamaka), thereby accounting for non-abiding nirvāṇa in a coherent way free of any contradiction. In doing so, however, he treated a Buddha's gnosis as if it were far more accessible to conceptual (logical) analysis than earlier traditions had accepted.

Indian and Tibetan scholars who later rejected Haribhadra's four *kāya* scheme (such as Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta, and Go ram pa) did so because they thought that Haribhadra had inaccurately mistaken his own

conceptualization about a Buddha's realization for the actual content of that realization, thereby creating more problems than he had solved. In their view, the broad (and indeterminate descriptions) of non-abiding nirvāṇa found in earlier, tri-*kāya* texts were quite sufficient for their purpose: to point practitioners toward the ultimate Mahāyāna goal (*dharmakāya*), which, in the final analysis, would only be comprehensible when it was (yogically) accomplished. Critics of Haribhadra thought that his four *kāya* theory represented a faulty logical construction of a Buddha's realization which distorted its actual, non-conceptual nature. They felt that the imprecision of the earlier three *kāya* theory had the merit of leaving unexpressed what was, in fact, inexpressible.

This means that the controversy over the number of *kāyas* (initiated by Haribhadra's new interpretation of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 in the late 8th century) operated on two hermeneutic levels. First, Indian and Tibetan scholars argued over the accurate philological interpretation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter: Did the relevant verses of the text express three *kāyas* or four according to the rules of Sanskrit (or Tibetan) grammar? Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, scholars used the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* as their textual point of departure to argue over the relative appropriateness of the three and four *kāya* descriptions of buddhahood as normative theories of a Buddha's enlightenment. In other words, implicit in the age-old debate over the accurate interpretation of *AA* chapter 8 are substantive disagreements over the nature of a Buddha's gnostic realization and the proper standpoint from which to comprehend and express it (the standpoint of yogic realization or of logical analysis).

What has been said above will serve as an introduction, synopsis, and conclusion to the chapters which follow. If the controversy over the number of *kāyas* taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (discussed mainly in chapters 9-12 below) is viewed in its relation to the apparent paradox which had always been implicit in the fundamental Mahāyāna theory of non-abiding nirvāṇa (discussed in chapter 5 below), the centuries of debate become comprehensible. The reader may therefore find it useful to refer back to this chapter during his or her reading of the chapters which follow.

Our study of the controversy begins by analyzing the text upon which the debate explicitly centered at every historical stage: the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter. Historical-critical and philological methods will be used to ascertain (to the best of our ability) the meaning intended by the author of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, and in particular, whether three or four Buddha *kāyas* were intended. To do this, of course, we must identify the primary terms and concepts which form the subject matter of *AA* chapter 8, and then look at their usage in earlier textual traditions, traditions upon which the author of the *AA* drew in composing his text (particularly the buddhological traditions of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* and the Yogācāra śāstras).

Even apart from the ongoing controversy over the number of *kāyas*, an historical-critical analysis of *AA* chapter 8 such as the one we will attempt has intrinsic value. For at the time that the *AA* was composed, there was a tremendous diversity in the descriptions of buddhahood in Mahāyāna sūtras and śāstras, reflecting a diverse set of views which had

developed in different milieus and textual traditions. When the *AA's* 8th chapter is examined in relation to its textual antecedents and historical context, it sheds light on the hermeneutic strategies used by early Mahāyāna masters to homologize such diverse views.

After examining important textual traditions antecedent to the *AA* (chapters 2-5 below), and after making an historical-critical and philological analysis of *AA* 8 (chapters 7-8 below), we can then discuss the differing opinions of the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholars who commented upon it (chapters 9-12 below).

## 3. The Heart of the Controversy: Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8, verses 1-6

The controversy over the number of *kāyas* centers mainly on the first six verses of *AA* chapter 8. Verse 8.1 describes a Buddha's *svābhāvikakāya* (translated here as the "Body in its Essence" or "Essence Body"):

> *sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ/*
> *svābhāviko muneḥ kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛti-lakṣaṇaḥ// AA 8.1*
>
> The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects,
> The Essence Body of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic. *AA 8.1*

Whatever this first verse means, all commentators agreed that it teaches the first *kāya* of a Buddha, the *svābhāvikakāya*, understood in some sense to be the innate nature of the "undefiled dharmas." In this context, the undefiled dharmas (*nirāsrava-* or *anāsrava-dharmāḥ*) are a Buddha's pure mental qualities, his gnoses (*jñāna*), obtained through the complete realization of the Mahāyāna path. Verses 8.2 through 8.6 list these undefiled Buddha dharmas, divided into twenty one types, and then relate them to the word "*dharmakāya*" ("Body of Dharma" or "Dharma Body"):

*bodhipakṣāpramāṇāni vimokṣā anupūrvaśaḥ/*
*navātmikā samāpattiḥ kṛtsnaṃ daśavidhātmakam//* *AA 8.2*
*abhibhvāyatanāny aṣṭa prakārāṇi prabhedataḥ/*
*araṇā praṇidhijñānam abhijñāḥ pratisaṃvidaḥ//* *AA 8.3*
*sarvākārāś catasro 'tha śuddhayo vaśitā daśa/balāni daśa catvāri*
*vaiśāradyāny arakṣaṇam//* *AA 8.4*
*trividhaṃ smṛtyupasthānaṃ tridhāsaṃmoṣa-dharmatā/*
*vasanāyāḥ samudghāto mahatī karuṇā jane//* *AA 8.5*
*āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭadaśeritāḥ/*
*sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate//* *AA 8.6*

"The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage which are proclaimed as eighteen, and omniscient wisdom": thus is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated.

*AA 8.2-8.6*

Ārya Vimuktisena, author of the earliest commentary extant, understood all six verses above to be teaching one *kāya* of the Buddha, which is called "*svābhāvikakāya*" in vs. 8.1, and then "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6.[12] More than two centuries later, Haribhadra reinterpreted the verses, arguing that Ārya Vimuktisena had been mistaken in his understanding of these two key terms. "*Svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1 and "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 were not synonyms, he said. They referred to two separate aspects of buddhahood: the first being the emptiness and purity of the undefiled Buddha dharmas, and the latter being the collection of those dharmas themselves.[13]

All commentators agreed that the remaining verses of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chaper 8 described two more *kāyas*, the *sāmbhogikakāya* (Shared Enjoyment Body) and the *nairmāṇikakāya*, (Emanation Body), and then described a Buddha's compassionate activity in the world (*buddha karma*). Therefore, the debate over whether the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter teaches three *kāyas* or four actually resolves into a debate over whether its first six verses teach one *kāya* or two. Three concepts found in those six verses are at the very heart of the controversy: 1. *svābhāvikakāya*, 2. *dharmakāya*, and 3. the undefiled Buddha dharmas (*anāsravadharmas*). In the next few chapters, then, we will focus primarily upon these concepts as they are expressed within

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12 *Abhisamayālamkāravṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-4-6 - 92-5-7. Sanskrit for the first chapter of this text has been edited by C. Pensa. Up to the present time, the rest of the text is available only in the Tibetan canon.

13 *Sphuṭārtha*, Amano, 1975, pp. 268-270. *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 914-916.

textual traditions antecedent to and contemporaneous with the *AA*. The concepts of *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya* and *buddhakarma*, while not at the center of the controversy over the number of *kāyas*, are equally a part of the basic subject matter of *AA* chapter 8, and do have a bearing on that controversy. We shall therefore examine these concepts (and others of relevance to them) in the chapters which follow.

# CHAPTER II

# BUDDHADHARMAS, DHARMAKĀYA, AND NIRVĀṆA IN SARVĀSTIVĀDA ABHIDHARMA

Traditionally, the mark of a Buddhist has always been his or her going for refuge to the Three Jewels (*triratna*): the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Sarvāstivāda scholars posed the question: Precisely what is the Buddha refuge? When one takes refuge in the Buddha what is one taking refuge in? The *Jñānaprasthāna*, the basic Abhidharma text of the Sarvāstivāda school, raises this question and gives a reply:

> One who takes refuge in the Buddha takes refuge in what? The real, true, dharmas, which have as their name, appellation, designation, and expression the word "Buddha;" one is said to take refuge in the Buddha when he takes refuge in the *āśaikṣa dharmas* which constitute a Buddha.[1]

The "dharmas" referred to here are mental qualities. *Āśaikṣa dharmas* are mental qualities of one who requires "no further training" (*āśaikṣa*), a person who has fully completed one of the supramundane yogic paths of Buddhism. In this context, they are the mental qualities which make a

[1] La Vallee Poussin, "Documents d'Abhidharma: 2. La Doctrine des Refuges," *Melanges Chinois et bouddhiques*, Vol. 1, 1931-32, p. 73.

Buddha a Buddha, a fully enlightened being. The Sarvāstivāda *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* comments:

> Some say that to take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in the body constituted by the Tathāgata's head, neck, stomach, back, hands, and feet. It is explained, then, that that body, born of a father and the mother, is [composed of] defiled (*sāsrava*) dharmas, and therefore not a source of refuge. The refuge is the Buddha's *aśaikṣa dharmas* which comprise enlightenment (*bodhi*), i.e. the *dharmakāya* (the Body of Dharma).[2]

The implication of this is that the *aśaikṣa dharmas* which comprise the Buddha refuge are undefiled (*anāsrava*). The *Abhidharmakośa bhāṣya* comments further:

> One who goes to the Buddha for refuge goes for refuge to the *aśaikṣa dharmas* which make him a Buddha; [the dharmas] principally because of which a person is called "Buddha"; [the dharmas] by obtaining which he understands all, thereby becoming a Buddha. What are those dharmas? *Kṣayajñāna* (knowledge of the destruction of the passions), etc., together with their attendants.[3]

The *Kośabhāṣya* goes on to say that one goes for refuge not to the Buddha's physical body, referred to as his "*rūpakāya*," but to his *aśaikṣa dharmas*, his special mental qualities which are beyond the need of further training. The reason is that those mental qualities are what actually constitute enlightenment. Their attainment is the attainment of enlightenment. They are the reason a person is called "Buddha."

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[2] *ibid.*, p. 75.
[3] *Kośabhāṣya*, 4.32.

According to the Sarvāstivādins, a Buddha's body (*rūpakāya*) after enlightenment remains the same as it was prior to enlightenment. Therefore, if that body were the source of refuge, a person would be able to go for refuge to a Buddha prior to his becoming a Buddha, which makes no sense. Furthermore, according to Sarvāstivādins, a Buddha's body is defiled (*sāsrava*), while a Buddha's *aśaikṣa dharmas* (mental qualities beyond the need of further training) are undefiled.

In these formulations, the Sarvāstivādins were identifying the qualities which make a Buddha a Buddha, the qualities without which there would be no Buddha, in other words, the qualities which comprise the essence of a Buddha. They identified Buddha's essence as the undefiled qualities of his mind: his *anāsrava* (undefiled) *aśaikṣa* (beyond training) *dharmas* (mental qualities). In the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (quoted above) in particular, that essence of buddhahood was referred to as "*dharmakāya*," which might be translated in this context as the "body of mental qualities which make a Buddha a Buddha." In Sarvāstivāda metaphysics, then, it was the *dharmakāya*, Buddha's undefiled essence, as opposed to his *rūpakāya*, his defiled physical body, which constituted the Buddha refuge.

It appears there were different traditions within Sarvāstivāda as to the precise identity of those Buddha dharmas which specifically comprised the Buddha refuge. In the *Kośabhāṣya* passage quoted above, Vasubandhu leaves it a bit open, saying just: "*Kṣayajñāna* (knowledge of the destruction of the passions), etc., together with their attendants." According to the Sarvāstivādins, *kṣayajñāna* (knowledge of the destruction of the passions), together with *anutpadajñana* (knowledge of

no further occurrence of the passions) are what comprise the enlightenment (*bodhi*) of a Buddha. But the same two knowledges are also what comprise the enlightenments (*bodhi*) of *śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*.[4] If they alone were taken as the Buddha refuge, there would be nothing to distinguish taking refuge in a Buddha from taking refuge in *śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* (Hinayāna arhats). Perhaps for this reason, as Vasubandhu notes, some scholars identified the Buddha refuge primarily with the eighteen"*āveṇika dharmas*," the mental qualities exclusive to a Buddha, which coexist with his other mental qualities (such as *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpadajñāna*).[5]

The *āveṇika dharmas* (qualities exclusive to a Buddha) are explained at length in chapter 7 of the *Kośabhāṣya*, where they are identified as the ten powers (*daśabala*), four forms of fearlessness (*vaiśāradya*), the three mindful equanimities (*smṛtyupasthāna*), and the great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*).[6] One passage of the *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* appears to specifically include those qualities within the *dharmakāya*::

> The Buddhas are the same with respect to the *dharmakāya*. Just as one Buddha is filled with infinite qualities, beginning with the eighteen qualities exclusive to Buddhas: the ten powers, four forms of fearlessness, great compassion, and the three mindful equanimities, so are the other Buddhas.[7]

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[4] *Kośabhāṣya* 6.67
[5] *Kośabhāṣya* 4.32, 7.28.
[6] *Ibid.* 7.28.
[7] La Vallee Poussin, "Documents d'Abhidharma: 2. La Doctrine des Refuges," pp. 75-76.

This passage appears to identify *dharmakāya* in a broad way with a Buddha's mental qualities in general, taking the qualities exclusive to Buddhas (*āveṇika dharmas*) as primary.

Where Vasubandhu's *Kośabhāṣya* (4.32 quoted above) says that a Buddha's *aśaikṣa dharmas* (comprising the Buddha refuge) are: "*kṣayajñāna* (knowledge of the destruction of the passions), etc., together with their attendants," Yaśomitra's *Vyākhyā* says that the expression "etc." refers to *anutpādajñāna* (knowledge of no further occurrence of the passions) and *samyagdṛṣti* (right view), while the phrase "together with their attendants" refers to the five undefiled aggregates (*anāsravāḥ pancaskandhāḥ*). According to Yaśomitra, then, the *Kośabhāṣya* identifies the Buddha refuge specifically with three types of undefiled Buddha knowledge (*kṣayajñāna*, *anutpadajñāna*, and *samyagdṛṣti*) together with the "five undefiled aggregates" (*anāsravāḥ pancaskandhāḥ*).

This is a reasonable interpretation. The *Abhidharmakośa* (vs. 7.1) and *bhāṣya* identify *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna* (constitutive of *bodhi*, 6.67) as forms of undefiled *prajñā* (transcendental discernment). And the *Kośabhāṣya*, commenting on vs. 1.2, identifies the five undefiled aggregates (*anāsravāḥ pancaskandhāḥ*) as the "attendants" of undefiled *prajñā*. It is reasonable to assume, then, that when Vasubandhu identified a Buddha's *aśaikṣa dharmas* (i.e. the Buddha refuge) as "*kṣayajñāna* (knowledge of the destruction of the passions), etc., together with their attendants," he was including the five undefiled aggregates (*anāsravāḥ pancaskandhāḥ*) as the "attendants" of *kṣayajñāna* and *anutpādajñāna*. The five undefiled aggregates are listed in *Kośabhāṣya* 1.27, where they

are given as: *śīla* (moral conduct), *samādhi* (concentration), *prajñā* (discernment), *vimukti* (liberation), and *vimuktijñānadarśana* (the vision of the knowledge of liberation).

Interestingly, the same set of five undefiled aggregates is found in other Hinayāna literature as a formulaic description of enlightenment, and at some stage, this list also came to be identified in such literature as "*dharmakāya*" (Body of Dharma). The *Dīghanikāya*, *Saṃyuttanikāya*, and *Itivuttaka* of the Pali Canon enumerated five undefiled "*dhammakkhandas*" constituitive of enlightenment: *sīla*, *samādhi*, *pañña*, *vimutti*, and *vimuttiñāṇadassana*.[8] The *Milindapaña* identified those five qualities as the "*dhammakāya*." Buddhaghoṣa's *Visuddhimagga* identified the same set of five qualities as the Buddha's "*dhammakāya*."

Harivarman, a proponent of the Bahuśrutīya school (author of the *Satyasiddhiśāstra*, ca. 3rd century CE), identified the same set of five undefiled aggregates with the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha. But because the five undefiled aggregates were not considered exclusive to a Buddha, but possessed by other types of arhat as well, he said that a Buddha's *dharmakāya* was distinguished by its inclusion of the eighteen *āveṇika dharmas* (qualities exclusive to a Buddha), i.e. the ten powers, four forms of fearlessness, three mindful equanimities, and great compassion.[9] As

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[8] La Vallee Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, p. 297; *Siddhi*, p. 767. On the five undefiled aggregates and their historical development in the Pali Canon and Abhidharmas, see Davidson, pp. 388-391.

[9] Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 148. Nagao, "On the Theory of the Buddha-Body," p. 27. On Harivarman, see Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, pp. 419-420. Candrakīrti lists the same five aggregates (*śīla*, *samādhi*, *prajñā*, *vimukti*, *vimuktijñānadarśana*) as factors which non-Mādhyamika opponents sometimes identified as the Tathāgata, *Prasannapadā*, 22.1.

mentioned above, those eighteen *āveṇika dharmas* were also said by Vasubandhu (in his *Kośabhāṣya*) to have been identified as *dharmakāya* by some (presumably Sarvāstivādin) scholars.

In the 7th chapter of Vasubandhu's *Kośabhāṣya*, besides the eighteen *āveṇika dharmas* exclusive to a Buddha, other mental qualities possessed by Buddhas are described which are said to be possessed by non-Buddhas as well: *araṇāsamādhi* (the meditative power preventing others' passions), *praṇidhijñāna* (the gnosis resulting from resolve), the four *pratisamvid* (analytical knowledges), the six *abhijñas* (supernatural knowledges), the four *dhyānas* (meditative absorptions), the four *ārūpyasamāpattis* (formless meditative states), the four *apramānas* (measureless thoughts), the eight *vimokṣas* (liberations), the eight *abhibhvāyatanas* (bases of overcoming), and the ten *kṛtsnāyatanas* (bases of meditative totality).[10] The 37 *bodhipakṣas* (factors which foster enlightenment), which are realized by Buddhas and other arhats, are described in detail in *Kośabhāṣya* chapter 6.

This set of Buddha dharmas, taken as a whole, was understood in Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma to comprise the entire set of a Buddha's mental qualities, (those shared with non-Buddhas as well as those unique to a Buddha). From what has been said above, it appears that various scholars of different Hinayāna schools identified different sets of dharmas as the essence of buddhahood which constituted the Buddha refuge or the Buddha's *dharmakāya*. It is important for us to note, however, that the

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[10] *Kośabhāṣya* 7.35 ff.

entire set of Buddha dharmas delineated in the *Kośabhāṣya* above is taken up again in Mahāyāna literature where it is routinely presented as the formulaic list of a Buddha's mental qualities. Most notably the *Kośabhāṣya's* set of Buddha dharmas given above, together with a few Mahāyāna additions, is formulaically presented throughout the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* as a description of a Buddha's qualities. The same set of dharmas also appears in many of the other Mahāyāna sūtras and śāstras for the same purpose, most importantly (for our purposes) in *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 vss. 2-6 (as quoted in the previous chapter).

Thus, the lists of Buddha dharmas (a Buddha's excellent mental qualities) found throughout the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, and later in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* are, for the most part, drawn from earlier proto-Abhidharma and Abhidharma traditions.[11] And, as noted above, in the

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11 See Lamotte, *La Somme du Grand Vehicule d'Asanga (Mahāyānasaṃgraha)*, pp. 51*-61*, and *Le Traite de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, Vol. 3, chapters 31-42 for an extensive bibliography of Pali, Agama and Sanskrit sources of the Buddha dharmas discussed here. As noted above, most of the Buddha dharmas which are listed in Mahāyāna texts such as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (vss. 8.2-8.6 quoted in previous chapter) were drawn from earlier pre-Mahāyāna sources: the Nikāyas and Agamas, various proto-Abhidharma and Abhidharma traditions. A smaller subset of the dharmas are distinctively Mahāyāna, such as the 4 *sarvākārapariśuddhi*, *asaṃmoṣadharmatā*, and the Mahāyāna formulation of the 18 *āveṇikadharmas* (Cf. Lamotte, *Le Traite*, ch. 41). In the Mahāyāna traditions, the entire set of Buddhadharmas (Buddha's mental qualities) were identified as *anāsrava* (undefiled), probably because all were understood to coexist with Buddha's gnosis of *śūnyatā* which (according to Mahāyāna gnoseology) never ceases. In various Abhidharma traditions, not all of a Buddha's mental qualities were considered *anāsrava*, and this undoubtedly contributed to disagreements over precisely which qualities were to be identified as the Buddha refuge, *dharmakāya*, etc. See La Vallee Poussin, "Documents d'Abhidharma: 2. La Doctrine des Refuges," pp. 95 ff. on the defiled dharmas of a Buddha which include great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). *Kośabhāṣya* 7.33 identifies great compassion as *laukika (sāṃvṛti)jñāna*, mundane knowledge, and *Kośabhāṣya* 7.2 identifies all *laukikajñāna* as defiled (*sāsrava*).

Sarvāstivāda tradition, such a collection of dharmas, or various subsets of that collection, were identified as the Buddha refuge or "*dharmakāya*," meaning the set of mental qualities which comprised a Buddha's very essence.

Later in its 7th chapter, the *Kośabhāṣya* uses the term "*dharmakāya*" in a new way. It describes buddhahood as the "*phalasampad*," the "perfection of the result." In this context the term "*dharmakāya*" refers to buddhahood in its entirety as the result of the yogic path, not just to its mental qualities. Vasubandhu explains that *dharmakāya*, meaning *phalasampad*, includes four perfections: *jñānasampad* (the perfection of gnosis), *prahāṇasampad* (the perfection of elimination), *prabhāvasampad* (the perfection of power), and *rūpakāyasampad* (the perfection of the physical body).[12] If this concept of "*dharmakāya phalasampad*" was passed on to Vasubandhu from earlier strata of Sarvāstivāda thought, it may be a precursor of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* "*dharmakāyaphalam*" (*AA* vs. 9.2) which also refers to the resultant state of buddhahood as a whole. This will be discussed in chapter 8 below.

It is important to note that sects of Hinayāna Buddhism in which Abhidharma became prominent, such as the Sarvāstivāda and Sthaviravāda, identified the ultimate result of the Buddhist paths (nirvāṇa) first and formost as an immortal (*amṛta*) or unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) state, a state utterly freed from the conditions which generated a transitory world of profound suffering. According to the Abhidharma sects, all

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12 *Kośabhāṣya*. 7.34.

Buddhist thought and practise was centered on the four noble truths (*āryasatya*): the truth of suffering (*duḥkhasatya*), the truth of the origin of suffering (*samudayasatya*), the truth of the cessation of suffering (*nirodhasatya*), and the truth of path (*mārgasatya*). Of these, the first and second truths concerned the intrinsically dissatisfying and painful nature of conditioned existence. The experiential world of beings was said to be caused by their own defiled actions (*karma*) and the passions (*kleśa*) which motivate them. Sentient existence for each individual constituted a beginningless cycle of rebirth and redeath referred to as "saṃsāra." The Buddhist concept of saṃsāra represented a horrific vision of repeated immersion into various forms of sentient existence, followed by decay, disease, death, and rebirth.

According to the first two noble truths, then, conditioned, sentient existence itself represented a profoundly disturbing existential problem which had to be solved. The defiled actions of sentient beings and the passions which drive them (the most basic passion being nescience, *avidyā*) constituted the fundamental conditions driving saṃsāra. Buddhist thought and practise as outlined in the various Abhidharmas was directed toward the extirpation of those conditions.

The fourth noble truth, the truth of path, was the set of practises which would cut the chain of causes driving that cycle of birth and death; the practises which removed the conditions for suffering existence. These were generally summarized as three spiritual trainings: moral conduct (*śīla*), yogic concentration (*samādhi*), and transcendental discernment (*prajñā*).

The third noble truth, cessation (*nirodha*) or nirvāṇa, represented the ultimate aim of Buddhist practise in the Abhidharma traditions: the state freed from the conditions which created saṃsāra. Nirvāṇa was the ultimate and final state attained when the supramundane yogic path had been completed. It represented salvation from saṃsāra precisely because it was understood to comprise a state of complete freedom from the chain of saṃsāric causes and conditions, i.e. precisely because it was unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*).

Precise philosophical formulations of nirvāṇa varied between the Abhidharma schools, but nirvāṇa was generally posited as the cessation (*nirodhasatya*) of the *karma* (actions) and *kleśa* (passions) which give rise to the cycle of rebirth. Nirvāṇa represented, most fundamentally, the state free from the conditions which produced the world and all experience of the world. As noted above, according to the *Kośabhāṣya* (on vs. 6.67), the highest *bodhi* (enlightenment) of arhats (including Buddhas) consisted of two special knowledges: the knowledge of the destruction of the passions (*kṣayajñāna*) and the knowledge of no further occurrence of the passions (*anutpādajñāna*). The reason these knowledges were identified as enlightenment (*bodhi*) was because they constituted a direct, personal verification that the fundamental causes for conditioned existence had been removed forever, i.e. that nirvāṇa had been attained.

Because an arhat who had attained such knowledges (whether a *śravaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, or Buddha arhat) still possessed embodied existence, he was said to have attained "*sopadhiśeṣa nirvāṇa*," nirvāṇa

with a residuum of conditioning. This meant that the arhat's physical body, and the mental components associated with it, comprised a residuum of conditioned existence (caused by the passions and actions of prior lives) which would continue until his death. But upon his death, because the root cause of future conditioned existence had been utterly removed, the arhat was said to pass into a state permanently free from further rebirth: "*nirupadhiśeṣa nirvāṇa*," nirvāṇa beyond any further residual conditioning. The *nirupadhiśeṣa nirvāṇa* of arhats, including Buddhas, then, represented an unconditioned state eternally liberated from the conditioned, mundane world of sentient beings.[13] And it was precisely because such a nirvāṇa was totally unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), lacking any causal connection to the conditioned, mundane world, that it represented a final salvation from the suffering of that world.

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[13] On nirvāṇa as conceived by the various Abhidharma schools including Sarvāstivāda, see Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism* (translated by Webb-Boin), pp. 40-42, 609-611 and references; La Vallee Poussin, *Nirvāṇa*, pp. 148 ff. on nirvāṇa as *amṛta* (immortal) and *asaṃskṛta* (unconditioned), pp. 168 ff. on nirvāṇa with and without residual conditioning. Lamotte and Poussin provide numerous references in the primary sources which need not be repeated here.

# CHAPTER III

# BUDDHADHARMAS AND DHARMAKĀYA IN THE PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS

The full enlightenment of a Buddha, *samyaksaṃbodhi*, is not treated at any length as a separate topic or chapter within the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* (except in the revised version of the 25,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* to be discussed in Chapter 7 below). In fact, reference to "*dharmakāya*" and "*rupakāya*" in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* (abbreviated henceforth as "*PP*" *sūtras*) is only very occasional. However, these *sūtras* do refer to buddhahood indirectly, and often, when they present formulaic lists of "all dharmas" (*sarvadharmāḥ*). The "all dharmas" are understood to comprise all phenomena in the psycho-physical universe of beings, as set forth in Abhidharma.[1] Included among all phenomena, of course, are a Buddha's mental qualities, his undefiled dharmas (*anāsrava dharmas*), much as they are listed in *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8, verses 2-6 (quoted above in Chapter 1, sec. 3). The undefiled dharmas are presented in extensive or abbreviated form throughout the *PP sūtras*. As the collection of Buddha's mental qualities beyond the need of further

[1] For the list of *sarvadharmāḥ*, see, for example, Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, fol. P 165-169, section I.5; Conze *Large Sutra*, pp. 120-123.

training (his *aśaikṣadharmas*) they correspond to what the Sarvāstivadin Abhidharmikas referred to as Buddha's "*dharmakāya*". It is important to note, however, that unlike the Abhidharma, nowhere in the *PP sūtras* is the collection of a Buddha's undefiled dharmas per se identified as being the "*dharmakāya*". The reason for this probably lies in the difference between the ontologies of the Abhidharma and the *PP sūtras*.

The Abhidharmikas analyzed physical and mental phenomena into their ultimate components, the various dharmas. Phenomenal things (trees, persons, etc., *saṃvṛtisat*) could be physically or analytically broken down into ultimate constituents: physical atoms and moments of different types of awareness (*paramārthasat*).[2] To develop transcendental discernment (*prajñā*) required seeing through the apparent permanence and personal selfhood which was ordinarily associated with the phenomenal world and the minds and bodies of beings. By analyzing phenomena into their mental and physical constituents (the various dharmas) the illusions of permanence and an independent self were replaced with the realizations of the impermanence (*anityatā*) of all conditioned things and the selflessness of persons (*pudgalanairātmya*). Such an analysis negated what was unreal (permanence in conditioned things, etc.), by affirming what was real (the various transitory dharmas which composed conditioned things). In line with this, when seeking for what it was which comprised the Buddha refuge, the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma identified Buddha's undefiled dharmas as the ultimate factors

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[2] *Abhidharmakośa*, 6.4.

constituting his buddhahood (*buddhakarakāḥ dharmāḥ*). The undefiled dharmas defined what a Buddha was. They were a Buddha's essence, his "*dharmakāya*."[3]

The ontological position of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* was quite different from that of the Abhidharmikas. The purpose of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* was not merely to negate the apparent permanence, etc. of phenomena by analytically breaking them down into the dharmas which were their ultimate constitutents. Rather, the purpose of the *PP sūtras* was to negate the ultimacy of the dharmas themselves, to deny their self-existence (*svabhāva*). The *PP sūtras'* formulaic repetition of the dharma lists, which were drawn mainly from Abhidharma or proto-Abhidharma sources, was done in order to deny the self-existence (*svabhāva*) of every one of the dharmas listed. The *PP's* analysis leading to transcendental discernment (or wisdom, *prajñā*) does not find dharmas. It finds only their emptiness of self-existence (*svabhāvaśūnyatā*).[4] This realization is known as the "*prajñāparamitā*" (often translated "the perfection of wisdom"). It, conjoined with the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the salvation of all other beings (*bodhicitta*), is the very

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[3] Refer to the quotations from the *Jñānaprasthāna*, *Mahāvibhāṣā*, and *Kośabhāṣya* in the previous chapter.

[4] e.g. Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* (the *PP sūtra* in 18,000 verses), fol. 276b, p.35; Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* (the revised *PP sūtra* in 25,000 verses), fol. P 524: "Thus the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva*, engaging in the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), having stood in the two emptinesses: the boundless emptiness and the emptiness without beginning or end, teaches the dharma for living beings. [He tells them:] Everything in the three realms is empty. Here there is no form, feeling, recognition, mental formations, or consciousness. There are no aggregates, no elements, no sense fields ..... Rather, all these dharmas are unreal. Their self-existence is non-existent...."

heart of the Mahāyāna path, which when completed, is said to issue in buddhahood.

Like the Abhidharma, the *PP sūtras* identify Buddha's dharmakāya, not his *rupakāya* (his physical form), as the defining feature of a Buddha, i.e. his essence.[5] But they differ fundamentally as to what that essence is. In the Abhidharma, it was a Buddha's undefiled dharmas which comprised his *dharmakāya*, his essence. But nowhere in the *PP sūtras* is the *dharmakāya* directly identified with the undefiled dharmas. This is because the highest attainment in the *PP* is not a collection of dharmas, no matter how exalted, but rather the perfect, non-dual realization of the emptiness of all dharmas. Since "*dharmakāya*" is one of the words used to describe that non-dual realization of emptiness, its meaning in the *PP sūtras* is quite different from its meaning in the Abhidharma.

In this regard, two points should be made: 1. From the perspective of *prajñāpāramitā* (non-dual realization of *śūnyatā*, emptiness) the *buddhadharmas*, along with all other dharmas, are not perceived. What is not perceived by perfect wisdom can not be taken as the essence of a Buddha. 2. This means that unlike the Abhidharma, the *PP sutras* do not identify a Buddha's *dharmakāya*, his essence, with any collection of

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[5] Sometimes the word "essence" in Western literature connotes an ontological ultimate or absolute principle. The term is not used here with such a sense. Here, and throughout this dissertation, the term "essence" refers simply to the set of qualities of a thing which make it that thing; the qualities without which it would not be that thing. The essence of a Buddha, in this sense, is that which makes a Buddha a Buddha. Because the *PP sūtras* deny independent or self-existence (*svabhāva*) to everything (including buddhahood), the *dharmakāya* (as the essence of a Buddha) is nowhere identified as a self-existent thing. Rather the *dharmakāya* is precisely the emptiness of all such self-existence and the non-dual realization of that emptiness. That is the Buddha's essence according to the *PP sūtras*.

*buddhadharmas* per se. They identify it instead with *śūnyatā*, the emptiness of all dharmas, and with *prajñāpāramitā*, the non-dual realization of that emptiness. These two points will now be elaborated.

Quoting from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (the *PP sūtra* in 8,000 verses):

> Bhagavan: If, Kauśika, on the one hand you were given this world filled up to the top with relics of the Tathāgatas; and if, on the other hand, you could share in a written copy of this perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*); and if now you had to choose between the two, which one would you take?
> Śakra: I would take just this perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). Because of my respect for [it as] the guide of the Tathāgatas. Because in actuality it is the body of the Tathāgatas (*tathāgatānāṃ śarīram*). As the Bhagavan has said: "The *dharmakāyas* are the Buddhas, the Bhagavans. But, monks, you should not think that this [physical] body is my true body. Monks, you will see me from the perfection of the *dharmakāya*. And this *tathāgatakāya* should be seen as brought about by the true limit, i.e. by the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*)."[6]

This passage from the 8,000 verse *PP sūtra* is important, being only one of a few such passages which specifically mention the "*dharmakāya*." It identifies the *prajñāpāramitā*, the perfection of wisdom, both as the *dharmakāya*, and as the primary cause of the *dharmakāya*. Throughout the *PP sūtras* precisely this kind of relationship is drawn between the *prajñāpāramitā* (perfection of wisdom) on the one hand and the various expressions for full enlightenment on the other: *sarvākārajñatā* (omniscience), *bodhi* (enlightenment), *tathagāta*, *tathagātakāya*, and

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[6] *Aṣṭasāhasrikā PP* as edited in Wogihara, *AA Āloka*, pp. 267-8. Conze's translation is in Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*, p. 118. Compare to similar statements in the chapter 22 of the *Samādhirājasūtra*, Regamey, pp. 49-59.

*dharmakāya*. The *PP sūtras* describe the *prajñāpāramitā* both as the primary cause of full enlightenment (however enlightenment is expressed), and as its very essence.[7]

Another important passage from the 8,000 verse *PP sūtra* also identifies the Buddha (referred to as the "Tathāgata") with his *dharmakāya*, as opposed to his *rupakāya* (his physical form). But this time it equates the *dharmakāya* specifically with the real nature of things (*dharmatā*), which is the same as suchness (*tathatā*) or emptiness (*śūnyatā*):

> Dharmodgata: Son of the family, Tathāgatas certainly do not come from anywhere, nor do they go anywhere. For, indeed, suchness (*tathatā*) is unmoving, and the Tathāgata is suchness. Nor, son of the family, does non-arising (*anutpāda*) come or go; the Tathāgata is non-arising. Nor is a coming or going of the true limit (*bhūtakoṭiḥ*) known; the Tathāgata is the true limit. Nor is a coming or going of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) known; the Tathāgata is emptiness....
>
> Nor, son of the family, is the Tathāgata other than the dharmas, for that which is the suchness of these dharmas (*dharmāṇāṃ tathatā*), that which is the suchness of all dharmas, that which is the suchness of the Tathāgata, is just this one suchness. For suchness has no division. This suchness is just one, son of the family. Suchness is not two, not three. Suchness is beyond enumeration because it is not a being (asattvāt).
>
> [Dharmodgata gives a metaphor of a foolish man who mistakes a mirage of water for actual water. He asks Sadāprarudita whether the mirage-water has come from anywhere or goes anywhere. Sadāprarudita replies that, since there is no water in the mirage, there is no coming or going of water, and the man who believes there is water in the mirage is indeed foolish.]

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[7] See, for example, the references to "All-knowledge", "Enlightenment", "Tathāgata", and "Dharmabody" listed in Conze's index to his *The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*, p. 303.

Dharmodgata: In just the same way, son of the family, those who have adhered to the Tathāgata through his form or his voice imagine a coming or going of the Tathāgata. They are to be called foolish and stupid, just like the person who conceives of water where there is no water. Because the Tathāgata is not to be seen from his *rupakāya* (his physical form). The Tathāgatas are *dharmakāyas*, and the real nature of things [*dharmatā*] does not come or go. Precisely so, there is no coming or going of the Tathāgatas. ....

The Bhagavan has said that all dharmas are like a dream. And those who do not know all dharmas to be like a dream as explained by the Tathāgata, they adhere to the Tathāgatas through [their] Name Body [*nāmakāya*] or Form Body [*rupakāya*] and imagine there is a coming or going of the Tathāgatas. ...But those who know all dharmas to be like a dream as they really are, as explained by the Tathāgata, they do not imagine a coming or going of any dharma,... they know the Tathāgata by means of his real nature (*dharmatayā*). ... Those who know the real nature [*dharmatā*] of the Tathāgata, they practice close to full enlightenment; they practice the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*).[8]

This passage makes several important points: 1. Ordinary people may see the Buddha (i.e. the Tathāgata) as his physical form, the *rupakāya*, but in actuality, he is the *dharmakāya,* which is invisible to such people. 2. The *dharmakāya* is identified with suchness (*tathatā*), emptiness (*śūnyatā)*, etc. and is therefore known only to those who engage in the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). From the phenomenal point-of-view of ordinary people, the Buddha appears to be his physical form, voice, etc.; the *rūpakāya*. But from the ultimate point-of-view cognizing emptiness, the *rūpakāya* does not even exist: Buddha is only the *dharmakāya*. And this is precisely the point-of-view of those who

8 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā PP* in Wogihara, *AA Āloka*, pp. 963-966. Cf. Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*, pp. 291-2.

"practice the perfection of wisdom" (*prajñāpāramitā*), the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā sūtra* contains an oft-quoted passage which appears to be historically related to the *Aṣṭāsahāsrikā* passage quoted above (one of the two passages was probably modelled on the other). The *Vajracchedikā* passage, in succinct form, affirms even more strongly the ontological insignificance of the Buddha's *rūpakāya* in relation to the *dharmakāya*. In reality, the Buddha is *dharmakāya* alone, which again, is identified with the real nature of things (*dharmatā*). But the real nature of things, suchness, emptiness, etc. is not discernible from a phenomenal point-of-view:

> Those who saw me by my form,
> Those who followed me by my voice,
> Have been engaged in wrong practise,
> Me those beings will not see.
> From the dharma are Buddhas seen,
> For the *dharmakāyas* are the guides,
> But the real nature of dharma (*dharmatā*) is not to be discerned,
> And it can not be discerned.[9]

What is discerned from the phenomenal perspective (Buddha's physical form, voice, etc.) is not really Buddha. What is non-dually cognized from the ultimate perspective (the perspective of the perfection of wisdom) is Buddha, the *dharmakāya*. From the perspective of the

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9 Conze, *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, pp. 56-7, vss. 26a-b: "*ye māṃ rūpeṇa ca-adrākṣur/ye māṃ ghoṣeṇa ca-anvayūḥ/mithyā prahāṇa prasṛtā/na māṃ drakṣyanti te janāḥ/ dharmato buddhā drastavyā/ dharmakāyā hi nāyakāḥ/ dharmatā ca na vijñeyā/ na sā śakyā vijānitum//*"

perfection of wisdom, no phenomena are discerned, neither those which comprise a Buddha's physical form (*rūpakāya*) nor those identified by the Abhidharmikas as comprising his mind (the undefiled Buddha dharmas discussed above). As it says in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā sūtra* (the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*):

> A bodhisattva who is endowed with that wisdom eye (*prājñācakṣuḥ*) does not know any dharma -- be it conditioned or unconditioned, wholesome or unwholesome, faulty or faultless, defiled or undefiled, with or without passions, mundane or supramundane. With that wisdom eye he does not see any dharma, or hear, consider, or discern one. This is the perfectly pure wisdom eye of a bodhisattva.[10]

What is not seen by transcendental wisdom (*prajñā*) can not be taken as defining of a Buddha. What is not found under the scrutiny of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) can not constitute what a Buddha really is, his essence, his *dharmakāya*. As mentioned above, in the *PP sūtras* the undefiled (*anāsrava*) dharmas of a Buddha are presented over and over again within the lists of all-dharmas (*sarvadharmāḥ*, the elements of the psycho-physical universe of beings). But along with all other dharmas, the self-existence (*svabhāva*) of a Buddha's undefiled dharmas is negated. Along with all other dharmas, those undefiled dharmas are not discerned by the *bodhisattva* engaging in the perfection of wisdom, the *prajñāpāramitā*. To recognize the *dharmakāya*, then, is not to discern any collection of dharmas, no matter how exalted or free of

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[10] *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, fol. P 78; cf. Conze, *Large Sutra*, p. 77.

fault. To recognize the *dharmakāya* is to realize the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) which perceives the emptiness of all such dharmas. As it says in the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*:

> Furthermore the Tathāgata, Arhat, Fully Enlightened One should not be attended to through the ten powers of a Tathāgata (*daśabala*), the four forms of fearlessness (*vaiśāradya*), the four analytical knowledges (*pratisamvid*), great compassion (*mahākaruṇa*), great love (*mahāmaitrī*), or the eighteen dharmas exclusive to a Buddha (*āveṇikadharma*). And why? Because they have no self-existence (*svabhāva*), and that which has no self-existence is nonexistent. And why? Because the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*) is a non-recollection and a non-attention.... It is thus that the bodhisattva who engages in perfect wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) should attend to the recollection of the Buddha.[11]

The *Saptaśatikāprajñāpāramitā* (700 verse *PP sūtra*) develops this theme further:

> The Lord [Bhagavan]: Do you, Manjūśrī, reflect on the Buddhadharmas?
> Manjūśrī: No indeed, Lord. If I could see the specific accomplishment of Buddhadharmas, then I would reflect on the Buddhadharmas. But the development of perfect wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) is not set up through discriminating any dharma and saying, "these are the dharmas of ordinary people, these are the dharmas of Disciples, these are the dharmas of Pratyekabuddhas, these are the dharmas of fully enlightened Buddhas." ... Just that, O Lord, is the development of perfect wisdom, where there is neither the stopping of the dharmas of an ordinary person, nor an acquisition of the Buddhadharmas."[12]

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11 *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, P 505b, cf. Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 551-2.

12 Translation by Conze, *Selected Sayings*, p. 117, #123, quoting from the *Saptaśatikāprajñāpāramitā*.

The various *PP sūtras*, then, identify buddhahood with perfect non-dual knowledge (*prajñāpāramitā*, *abhisambodhi*, etc.), the object realized by that knowledge (emptiness, suchness, the true limit, etc.), and both together, as undifferentiated. Such is the *dharmakāya*.

> Subhuti: "Buddha" is spoken of, Bhagavan. For what is that a designation?
> Bhagavan: The true reality (*bhūta-artha*) is called "Buddha." Furthermore, when one has fully known (*abhisambuddha*) that real dharma, has realized that true reality, has fully known all phenomena as they really are, then he is called "Buddha."
> Subhuti: "Enlightenment" (*bodhi*) is spoken of, Bhagavan. For what is that a designation?
> The Bhagavan: "Enlightenment" is a designation for emptiness (*śūnyatā*). It is a designation for suchness (*tathatā*). It is a designation for the true limit (*bhūtakoṭi*). It is a designation for the dharma realm (*dharmadhātu*). ...Moreover, Subhuti, because the Buddhas, the Bhagavans, have this enlightenment, it is called "enlightenment." Moreover, Subhuti, because it is fully known (*abhisambuddha*) by the Buddhas, the Bhagavans, it is called "enlightenment."[13]

> The Lord: How, Manjūśrī, should the Tathāgata be seen and honored?
> Manjūśrī: Through the mode of suchness (*tathatā*) do I see the Tathāgata, through the mode of non-discrimination, in the manner of non-observation.[14]

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13 *Pañcaviṃśati*, Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, fol. P 484b-485b. Cf. *Large Sutra*, p. 530-531.
14 Translation by Conze, *Selected Sayings*, p. 116, #122, quoting from the *Saptaśatikāprajñāpāramitā*.

In spite of all that has been said, the *PP sūtras* must not be construed as simply denying the existence of the undefiled dharmas which the Abhidharma understood to constitute full enlightenment. In several passages the *PP sūtras* affirm that these dharmas are indeed attained, but only by those who realize that they, like all other dharmas, are empty. In other words, only those who practice the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) accomplish the mental qualities (undefiled dharmas) which are understood from a phenomenal point-of-view to constitute full enlightenment. Conventionally (from a phenomenal point-of-view), the various psycho-physical phenomena of the universe (including the pure mental qualities of a Buddha) are ontologically affirmed. For this reason, the bodhisattvas and Buddhas make various distinctions between the dharmas (those which are virtuous and those which are non-virtuous, those which are to be attained and those which are to be abandoned, etc.) in order to teach sentient beings the way to progress on the path to enlightenment. Such teaching is given precisely to lead the trainees to the point at which they personally and directly realize the emptiness of all such distinctions (and to inculcate in them the compassion which impels them to teach others the same path). With the direct realization of emptiness, they too partake in the ultimate point-of-view (*prajñāpāramitā*) from which no phenomena (including a Buddha's qualities) are perceived.[15]

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15 *Pañcaviṃsati*: Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, P 485a-486b. Cf. *Large Sutra*, p. 531. Along similar lines, see *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*P 233,P 245b, P 505b, P 522; Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 231-2, 254, 552, 571-6.

One corollary of this ontology takes form in the *PP* theory of *dharmakāya* (as illustrated in the quotations above). It is important for us to make special note of it as it became an important part of all early Mahāyāna buddhology: The *PP sūtras* never identify the *dharmakāya* with the collection of a Buddha's undefiled dharmas per se. In the *PP sūtras*, the Buddha, the Tathāgata, *dharmakāya*, *tathāgatakāya*, etc., are identified either with the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), with emptiness, or with both taken together (as a non-dual cogntion in which subject and object are undivided).

To review what has been said: the Abhidharmikas identified a Buddha's essence, designated "*dharmakāya*," as the undefiled dharmas comprising his mind (in contradistinction to his defiled body, his "*rūpakāya*"). Various sets or subsets of undefiled dharmas (pure mental qualities) were regarded by them as the real components of a Buddha's essential nature. The *PP sūtras*, because they espoused a different ontology from the Abhidharmikas, presented a very different buddhology (theory of buddhahood). According to the *PP sūtras*, no phenomena, including the undefiled dharmas of a Buddha, have ontological status from the ultimate perspective. From the perspective of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*, which bodhisattvas train in and Buddhas have perfected) no dharmas are seen. Therefore, no collection of dharmas, no matter how exalted or pure, can be defining of a Buddha, can constitute his *dharmakāya*. For this reason, the term "*dharmakāya*" is never used in the *PP sūtras* (as it was in Abhidharma texts) to refer to the collection of undefiled dharmas per se.

According to the *PP sūtras*, what defines a Buddha is only what comes under the purview of the ultimate perspective of bodhisattvas and Buddhas. That ultimate perspective consists of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) non-dually cognizing emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Thus, the term "*dharmakāya*" in the *PP sūtras*, as in the quotes given above, refers both to the perfection of wisdom itself (*prajñāpāramitā*) and the object it knows non-dually: *śūnyatā* (*tathatā*, *bhūtakoṭi*, *dharmadhātu*, etc).[16]

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[16] The bases for this analysis are the descriptions of *dharmakāya* found in versions of the 8,000, 18,000, and 25,000 verse *PP sūtras* available in Sanskrit and Tibetan, and closely related descriptions in the *Vajracchedikā PP* and the *Saptaśatikā PP* (some of which are translated above). According to Professor Lewis Lancaster's studies of the development of the 8,000 verse *PP sūtras* in Chinese translations, the accounts of *dharmakāya* I have given probably belong to the middle and late stages of the 8,000 *PP sūtra*, whose earliest Chinese translations were made in the early 5th and mid-7th centuries (Rawlinson, "The Position of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in the Development of early Mahāyāna," pp. 16, 30). The *Vajracchedikā PP* was translated into Chinese at the beginning of the 5th century (Conze, *PP Literature*, p. 60). Obviously, these *PP sūtras* had a significant period of development in India prior to their translation in China. A very similar account of *dharmakāya* vs. *rūpakāya* is found in the *Samādhirājasūtra* whose terminus ad quem has been put in the 4th century (Regamay, *Three Chapters from Samādhirājasūtra*, pp. 11-12. But see Schopen, "Notes on the Cult of the Book," pp. 153ff. and "Sukhāvatī," p. 204 where he notes that available evidence has pushed back speculative estimations of the dates of the 8,000 *PP*, *Vajracchedikā PP*, and *Samādhirājasūtra*, dating the latter two to perhaps the 2nd century C.E.). It is generally held among modern scholars, including Professor Lancaster (Lancaster, "The Oldest Mahāyāna Sūtra," p. 36), that the two *kāya* theory found in the *PP sūtras* was a forerunner of the Yogācāra theory of three *kāyas*. The distinct three *kāya* terminology of Yogācāra appears in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* ("*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," "*nairmāṇikakāya*"). It is likely, therefore, that the *PP* conceptions of *dharmakāya* discussed above developed prior to the period of composition of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (ca. 4th to early 6th century), although expressions of them continued to be added to the *PP sūtras* throughout the following centuries (the date of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* will be discussed in chapter 6 below).

One point should be made parenthetically. Lancaster identified one mention of the word "*dharmakāya*" in a passage of the 8000 *PP* which seems to carry the meaning "collection of *dharma* texts," rather than the meanings identified here: emptiness and *prajñāpāramitā*. Lancaster believes that this passage is part of the earliest stage of development of the 8000 *PP* text (Lancaster, "The Oldest Mahāyāna Sūtra," p.36). What I am focussing on here are the meanings of the word "*dharmakāya*" in the middle and late texts which became especially important to the Yogācāras and, I believe, to the author of the *AA*.

The *PP sūtras*, like the Abhidharma texts, occasionally also mention the "*rūpakāya*" of a Buddha. In the *PP sūtras* the term refers to a Buddha's physical manifestion. But it is apparently used in a broad sense inclusive of a broad range of manifestations. The various *PP sūtras* open with the familiar sūtra formula: "thus have I heard at one time," and then identify an actual location in India where the sūtra is said to have been expounded, e.g. Rājagṛha or Śrāvastī. Because the *PP sūtras* declare themselves in historical time as taught by Śākyamuni Buddha in Indian geography, the Buddha's occasional mentions of his "*rūpakāya*" seem to refer, for the most part, to his physical form as the teacher of the sūtra. However, this physical form is sometimes described in marvelous and miraculous terms, gleeming with golden hue, emanating purifying light throughout the universe through all skin pores, illuminating the universe with the light of a smile, etc. The 32 marks and 80 signs of the legendary great person (*mahāpuruṣa*) of Indian legend are also ascribed to it. The form of Buddha as the teacher and central figure of the sūtra is glorified in cosmic terms far exceeding descriptions found in the earlier sūtras of pre-Mahāyāna traditions. A number of *PP* passages also describe the Buddha emanating many other miraculous forms, including innumerable emanations of his own body, into various realms of beings to assist them. Such emanations, as physical forms, were also included in the semantic range of the term "*rūpakāya*."[17] Within the *PP sūtras*, then, no

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17 See, for example, Conze's *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, pp. 35-44, 175, 231, and 254 for various manifestations of the Buddha's physical form, designated as "*rūpakāya*" or "*ātmabhāva*."

terminology explicitly distinguished the glorified central figure of the sūtra (Sākyamuni) from the infinite forms which that figure emanated into the universe of beings.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE YOGĀCĀRA THEORY OF SVĀBHĀVIKAKĀYA

## 1. Introduction - The need to look at Yogācāra texts in order to analyze the Abhisamayālaṃkāra's 8th Chapter

The eighth chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* explained buddhahood by reference to a set of five key terms: "*svābhāvikakāya*" (essence body), "*dharmakāya*" (body of dharma), "*sāmbhogikakāya*" (body of shared enjoyment), "*nairmāṇikakāya*" (body of emanation), and "*kāritra*" (or "*karma*," Buddha's activity). These terms, particularly the terms for multiple *buddha kāyas*, created an ambiguity for some later commentators, who disagreed over whether the text was teaching three or four *kāyas*. According to an introductory verse of the text, the *AA's* eighth chapter contained four topics, but it was even unclear which of the five terms comprised those four topics.[1]

Haribhadra, in his *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārtha*, interpreted *AA* chapter 8 as teaching four *buddha kāyas* (comprising the four topics of the chapter) together with Buddha's activity. Using a Madhyamaka style of analysis,

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[1] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, 1.17, Amano, 1975, p.16. *AA* vss. 8.1, 8.6, 8.12, 8.33, 8.34, 9.2, Amano, 1975, pp. 262, 264, 276, 290, 292.

he logically separated the ultimate truth of the Buddha (*paramārtha satya*) from the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*). The former he identified as the *svābhāvikakāya*: the *śūnyatā* (emptiness) or *dharmatā* (ultimate reality) of the Buddha's mind. The latter he resolved into three conventional *kāyas*, distinguished according to the type of person to whom each appears. The [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* is the Buddha's own gnosis (the collection of undefiled dharmas) which appear directly only to himself as a conventional object.[2] The *sāmbhogikakāya* is the form in which Buddha appears conventionally to *ārya bodhisattvas*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya* is the form conventionally appearing to other beings (Amano, 1975, pp. 262, 290). For Haribhadra, these four *kāyas*, the first *kāya* as ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*) and the other three *kāyas* as conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*) comprised the four topics of *AA* chapter 8 . The other subject treated in detail in *AA* 8 is Buddha's activity (*buddha kāritra*). Haribhadra treated this as an adjunct item associated with the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* (Amano, 1975, p. 292).

Within Haribhadra's delineation of the four *kāyas*, then, the first is the ultimate nature of a Buddha's gnosis (*svābhāvikakāya*, *dharmatā*), the second is the gnosis in its conventional appearance to Buddhas themselves, and the third and fourth are the conventional appearances the gnosis

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2 The *AA* uses only the term "*dharmakāya*." Haribhadra interprets its use in *AA* 8.6 to mean "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*," "the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis." Later, Tibetan commentors rendered this "*yeshe chos sku*," which in Sanskrit would be "*jñānadharmakāya*," "the gnosis *dharmakāya*." Here I enclose "*jñānātmaka*" in brackets when it stands before "*dharmakāya*" to indicate that the term "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*" does not appear in the *AA* itself but is of Haribhadra's making. *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 268, 274, 292; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 914, 915 line 21, 916 lines 18 and 22, 925.

manifests for others. Thus, Haribhadra's second *kāya* consisting of gnosis, the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*, is central in his scheme, because in a very real sense he defines the other *kāyas* in terms of it. As the collection of undefiled *buddha dharmas* (gnoses) which comprise the enlightened mind of a Buddha, the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* is the conventional basis for the emptiness which Haribhadra defines as the *svābhāvikakāya*, and it is the dominant condition through which the two form *kāyas* manifest for others. This places it at the very heart of his four *kāya* scheme. And it makes the collection of the undefiled *buddha dharmas* the central defining principle of buddhahood. In this Haribhadra seems to refer back to the *Abhidharma* formulation which defined buddhahood in terms of the undefiled *buddha dharmas*, but he updates it by his application of Madhyamaka metaphysics distinguishing conventional and ultimate truths (the *buddha dharmas* as conventional truth comprise the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*, their emptiness as ultimate truth is the *svābhāvikakāya*).

Although Haribhara's interpretation of *AA* 8 is brilliant, it will be shown in later chapters that it is neither philologically nor historically accurate. A more accurate interpretation of *AA* 8 is reached by reading it much more straightforwardly and literally than Haribhadra did (in this regard Ārya Vimuktisena set the standard), by placing it in its historical context, and by examining it in relation to the principal textual traditions upon which it drew. One of those textual traditions is the collection of *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* which we discussed in the last chapter. The *AA* is primarily a commentary upon the 25,000 *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, and the

buddhological expressions within that *sūtra* (and the other *PP sūtras* closely related to it) are therefore critical toward an understanding of its 8th chapter (this will be further discussed in chapter 7 below). But, the *kāya* terminology which appears in *AA* 8 was developed in another textual tradition, the Yogācāra. And it is to that tradition that we must now turn.

It was in texts which appeared within (broadly) the same historical period as the *AA* (ca. 3rd to 6th century CE) that the theory of multiple *buddha kāyas* (involving *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*) was first formalized, texts which, like the *AA*, became traditionally associated with Maitreya/Asanga (the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (*MSA*), *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (*Msg*), *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*DDV*), *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*RGV*), etc. discussed below). All of them are either Yogācārin or closely related to the Yogācāra tradition. They represent the tradition of multiple *kāya* terminology from which the *AA* drew. As mentioned above, in Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8, the set of undefiled *buddha dharmas* became the central defining characteristic of buddhahood. In the Yogācāra scheme, this was emphatically not the case. In Haribhadra's interpretation of the *AA*, the set of undefiled *buddha dharmas* formed a fourth *kāya* (the *[jñāna] dharmakāya*). In the Yogācāra scheme, it was inconceivable to posit such a fourth *kāya*.

The *AA* differed from the Yogācāra synoptic treatises of its period in purporting to serve not as a general commentary on numerous Mahāyāna *sūtras*, but as a direct commentary specifically on the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*. *AA* 8's fundamental reliance on the Large *PP sūtra* gave its description of buddhahood certain characteristics unique to it which will

be examined in later chapters. But at the same time, *AA* 8 specifically used the three *kāya* names which were used only in Yogācāra and related texts of its period, not in the *PP sūtras* of its period.[3]

At the time the *AA* was composed (ca. 4th to early 6th century CE), then, the multiple *kāya* terminology which appears in its 8th chapter appeared elsewhere only within the Yogācāra related literature of the same general period. In fact, the terminology was developed in that literature. When the *AA* was composed, the only meanings the specific terms: "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," "*nairmāṇikakāya*" had were the meanings they possessed in Yogācāra related texts. And the term "*dharmakāya*" took on special meaning in relation to them. Conze has noted a number of places in the *AA* where it drew upon Yogācāra ideas in order to explicate the *PP sūtras*[4]. But nowhere is this more evident than in *AA* chapter 8, where the terminology of multiple *kāyas* found in principle Yogācāra texts (*MSA*, *Msg*, etc.) is clearly superimposed onto *PP* material.

The *AA's* 8th chapter may be better understood, then, by viewing it in relation to the other textual traditions of its time, particularly the Yogācāra traditions, than by seeking to interpret it in isolation as though it were simply an independent commentary on the *PP sūtras* (the latter

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3 One particular version of the Large *PP sūtra*, referred to in modern scholarship as the "revised *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*," mentions in one passage the names of the three *kāyas* found in the Yogācāra *śāstras*. However, much evidence will be presented later to show that this particular passage (and probably that whole version of the sūtra) was composed well after the composition of the *AA*. No other version of any *PP sūtra*, to my knowledge, mentions the names of the three *kāyas*; though the *PP sūtras* do, of course, mention the *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya*.

4 Conze, *PP Lit.*, pp. 102-104.

method being that of Haribhadra, and in modern times, Obermiller, Poussin, Dutt, and other scholars who followed Haribhadra in holding that the *AA* taught four *kāyas*).[5] Comparative textual work being a desideratum, then, the subject matter of this chapter will be the three *kāya* theory of Yogācāra and its relation to other Yogācāra models of enlightenment which are relevant to the interpretation of *AA* 8.

2. Yogācāra Descriptions of Buddhahood: Buddhahood is not Defined by the Buddhadharmas, but by the Dharmakāya, the Perfect Realization of Suchness

In a number of early Mahāyāna sūtras, along with references to the formless *dharmakāya* of the Buddha, there are physical descriptions of Buddhas which go far beyond what is found in the Pali canon[6]. Attempts have been made by scholars to trace the historical development of these ideas in Buddhism prior to the full-blown advent of the Mahāyāna[7]. Here I will only note that certain śāstras seminal for a newly emerging

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[5] Obermiller, *Analysis of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, pp. 11-12; Poussin, *Siddhi*, pp. 790-791; Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 155, Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*; p. 103.

[6] Sūtras and collections of sūtras such as the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Avataṃsaka*, *Akṣayamati*, *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, etc. In them, exalted *tathāgatas* are described presiding over pure *buddha kṣetras*, e.g. Śākyamuni and Akṣobhya of the *PP sūtras*, Vairocana of the *Avataṃsaka*, Amitābha of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, etc. And descriptions are given of Buddhas and bodhisattvas emanating infinite arrays of forms to teach living beings at the times and places fitted to their needs.

[7] N. Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 136-170; *Hobogirin*, article: "Busshin" by P. Demieville; La Vallee Poussin, *La Siddhi*, pp. 762-813, "Notes sur les Corps du Bouddha".

Yogācāra school reformulated earlier two-*kāya* descriptions in order to accomodate the new forms found in Mahāyāna sūtras. These śāstras presented a new theory of three *kāyas*: the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya* where "*sāmbhogikakāya*" was the term for the exalted *tathāgatas* of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and "*nairmāṇikakāya*" referred to their infinite emanations into the realms of living beings[8]. Both of these *kāyas* were understood as subsets of the earlier, wider category "*rupakāya*." The *svābhāvikakāya* corresponded broadly to what the Mahāyāna sūtras called the "*dharmakāya*." It will be the main focus of what follows.

It may well be that the earliest textual material to set forth a clear and distinct terminology of three *kāyas* is found in the *bodhi* chapter of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (*MSA*), verses 9.56-66 (four of these verses, 9.56-59, also appear at the end of the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra*, Nishio, pp. 22-23).[9] The *MSA* served as the basis for extensive discussion of the three

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[8] This summarizes part of the description of these two *kāyas* found in Sthiramati's and Asvabhāva's commentaries on *MSA* 9.61 and in Vasubandhu's and Asvabhāva's commentaries on the *Msg* 10.30.

[9] I strongly suspect the *MSA* verse śāstra was composed prior to the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra*. See John Keenan, "A Study of the Buddhabhūmyupadeśa," pp. 336-354 for some good arguments for the *MSA*'s priority to the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra*. He has since adopted the opposite view of the relative chronology of these texts, but I do not think he did so for good reasons ("Pure Land Systematics in India", see also Paul Griffiths, "Buddha and God," p. 5, notes 16 and 18). The *MSA* verse text often gives the appearance of a work in which seminal Yogācāra ideas, especially those concerning buddhahood, are presented in a relatively brief and undeveloped form, while the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra* (like Sthiramati's *MSA* commentary) gives a much more extensive and developed articulation of buddhahood vis à vis *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* and the four *jñānas*. The four verses in question concern the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, and it may be that they were composed prior to both texts, or, as I think more likely, that the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra*, a prose text, borrowed them from the *MSA*, a verse text, as a verse basis for its prose discussion of *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*.

*kāyas* in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (*Msg*), which often quotes it. The *MSA* is especially significant for our study of *AA* 8, because it is the first śāstra we know of to attempt a systematic explanation of the 3 *kāyas*,[10] and because later proponents of 3 *kāyas* who commented on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* in India and Tibet followed and quoted this text more than any other in support of their views. The *MSA*, the *Msg*, and their commentaries seem to constitute a core Yogācāra literature which is closely related to the discussions of three kāyas which appear in numerous other texts: the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*RGV*), *Kāyatrayasūtra*, *Kāyatrayastotra*, *Kāyatrayāvatāramukhaśāstra*, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*,[11] etc. Brief mention of three *kāyas* is also

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10 One verse apparently naming the 3 *kāyas* as operative modes of the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* appears in both the *MSA* (9.59) and in the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra* (Nishio, p. 23), but whereas the *MSA* further explains it in some detail in *MSA* 9.60-66 and its *bhāṣya*, the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra* does not.

11 For example, the *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna's* explanation of the 3 *kāyas* (Nishio, pp. 125-6) appears to draw heavily from the explanations found in the *MSA bhāṣya* (on *MSA* 9.60-66) and *Msg* chapter 10 (in Lamotte's edition, especially sections 10.1-10.3). The *Buddhabhumivyākhyāna* was written by Śīlabhadra, whose dates are thought to be 529-645 C.E. (Nakamura, p. 281). The *MSA* is dated from approximately the 3rd to the 4th century C.E. (see below). The other texts listed here are probably all later than the *MSA*. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*RGV*) is dated from approximately the 4th to the 5th century C.E (Nakamura, p. 261) and quotes three times from the *MSA's* 9th chapter on *bodhi* (Takasaki, *A Study*, p. 41). The *Kāyatrayastotra* is listed in the Tibetan Tripitika as a work of Nāgārjuna (Pk 2015), but Tarānātha identifies the author as Nāgāhvaya whose date is not known (identified with the Vijñapti-Madhyamaka school, Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, p. 56). I assume this text post-dates the *MSA*, because the theory of three *kāyas* is so closely related to other Yogācāra models worked out in the *MSA* and later in the *Msg* (this will be discussed at length in this and the following chapter), while the *Kāyatrayastotra* appears to adopt the Yogācāra *kāya* model to a Madhyamaka mode of expression (Cf. Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana*, p. 16, n. 35 for a bibliography of modern editions of this text and further arguments that it is not by Nāgārjuna). The *Kāyatrayāvataramukhaśāstra* (Pk 5290) is listed in the Tibetan Tripitika as a work by Nāgamitra, and its commentary, the *Kāyatrayavṛtti*, is ascribed to Jñānacandra who is listed in the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* as a (Yogācārin) disciple of Dharmapāla (6th century). Both this śāstra and its *vṛtti* analyze the three *kāyas* in a much more highly developed form than the more primitive presentation found in the *MSA*. The

made in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*DDV*) and in the *Madhyantavibhāga* (*MAV*) *bhāṣya* and *ṭikā*.[12] The *MSA* and *Msg* were authored in the formative period of the Yogācāra school, the former perhaps in the 3rd to 4th century, the latter in late 4th century C.E.[13] They and their commentaries give a good picture of the religio-philosophical context, primarily Yogācārin, in which the three *kāya* theory developed. They present the three *kāya* theory in relation to other Yogācāra models of enlightenment: *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, *viśuddhātathatā*, *nirvikalpajñāna*, and *dharmakāya*.

As we saw earlier, various Abhidharma scholars explained a Buddha's essential nature as his undefiled mental qualities (*anāsrava dharmāḥ*), i.e. his ten powers (*daśabala*), four forms of fearlessness (*vaiśāradya*), great compassion (*mahākarunā*), etc. For such Abhidharmikas, these undefiled *buddha dharmas* comprised the essence of buddhahood and therefore

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*Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its textual history will be discussed at length in later chapters. It was probably composed sometime from the 4th to the early 6th century C.E. (chapter 6 below).

12 *MAVbhāṣya* 4.14. *DDV*, sDe dge phi, fol. 47b4, 51b6. *RGV*, chapter 2, presents a three *kāya* theory at some length. Because its focus is so squarely on the theory of *tathāgatagarbha*, it stands apart somewhat from the other texts mentioned here. However, it relates its basic model of enlightenment, *nirmala tathatā*, to the theory of three *kāyas* in much the same way that the *MSA*, *Msg*, and their commentaries relate *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* and *tathatāviśuddhi/nirvikalpajñāna* to the *kāyas*. It quotes from *MSA* 9, and in one portion of its second chapter it is clearly applying the *MSA*'s buddhology to its theory of *tathāgatagarbha*. See *RGV*, Johnson pp. 85-88, Takasaki, p. 41.

13 A bibliography of modern scholars' speculations on the history of early Yogācāra can be found in Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 263. Summaries are found in Ruegg, *La Theorie*, pp. 30-55; Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation", pp. 14-49, 126-149. Davidson reexamines the questions of authorship of all early Yogacara śāstras, and concludes that the authorship of the *MAV*, *DDV*, and *AA* is still unknown. I agree.

defined it. Haribhadra partially followed their lead in his comments on *AA* 8 by defining what he called Buddha's "gnosis *dharmakāya*" ("*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*") as the collection of the twenty-one types of undefiled *buddha dharmas*, and then explaining the other *kāyas* in relation to it.[14]

The Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism arose prior to and during the period that the *AA* was presumably composed. The names which *AA* 8 used for the *buddha kāyas* (viz. "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," "*nairmāṇikakāya*") were presented and explained in detail for the first time in fundamental Yogācāra treatises such as the *MSA* and *Msg*. And these Yogācāra treatises presented their 3 *kāya* theory in such a way as to make it quite explicit that buddhahood was not to be defined in terms of the *buddha dharmas* (*anāsrava dharmas*). In Yogācāra texts, in line with the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, the undefiled *buddha dharmas* were acknowledged to be qualities possessed by a Buddha ("*yoga*") from a phenomenal point-of-view, but were not taken to be a Buddha's defining quality or essence ("*svabhāva*"). We saw earlier that the *PP sūtras* identified the highest spiritual attainment not as a collection of dharmas, no matter how exalted, but as the direct realization of the emptiness of all dharmas. The emptiness of all dharmas, together with its non-dual realization (*prajñāpāramitā*), was what the *PP sūtras* called "*tathāgatakāya*" or "*dharmakāya*", comprising the very essence of buddhahood. The *MSA*, *Msg*, and other Yogācāra texts, basing

14 *AA-Āloka*, Wogihara edition, pp. 914-925; *AA-Sphuṭārtha*, Amano, 1975, pp. 262-292.

themselves on the *PP* and other early Mahāyāna sūtras, follow a similar course.

To begin with, the *MSA* and its commentaries agree with the *PP sūtras* that while the undefiled dharmas are acknowledged to be qualities of a Buddha, they are not taken as his defining quality or essence (*svabhāva*). The *MSA's* ninth chapter focusses on the state of buddhahood. The *MSA bhāṣya* calls it "*bodhyadhikāraḥ*", "the chapter on enlightenment". Near the beginning of this chapter, *MSA* 9.4 and its *bhāṣya* say:

> On the non-dual character of buddhahood, and its power:[15]
>
> All phenomena are buddhahood,
> But there is no phenomenon at all.
> It consists of excellent qualities,
> But it is not defined by them. *MSA* 9.4
>
> All phenomena are buddhahood, because suchness has no differentiation, and because [buddhahood] consists of the purification of that [suchness]. But in buddhahood there is no phenomena whatsoever that exists with the imagined nature of phenomena. And buddhahood consists of excellent qualities, because with its occurrence is the transformation of virtues: the perfections, etc. But it is not defined by them, because the perfections, etc. have no perfect establishment by nature as perfections, etc. This is its non-dual nature.[16]

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[15] *MSA* 9.4 concerns buddhahood's non-dual character. *MSA* 9.5 concerns its power. Here *MSA* 9.4 and its *bhāṣya* are translated.

[16] Levi, *MSA* and *bhāṣya*, 9.4: "*sarvadharmāśca buddhatvaṃ dharmo naiva ca kaścana/ śukladharmamayaṃ tattca na ca taistannirupyate/... sarvadharmāśca buddhatvaṃ tathatāyā abhinnatvāttadviśuddhiprabāvitatvāttca buddhatvasya na ca kaściddharmo 'sti parikalpitena dharmasvabhāvena śukladharmamayaṃ ca buddhatvaṃ pāramitādīnāṃ kuśalānāṃ tadbhāvena parivṛtteḥ/ na ca taistannirdiśyate pāramitādīnāṃ pāramitādibhavenāparinispatteridamadvayalakṣanam/.*"

Here, a definition of buddhahood is given not in terms of its set of excellent qualities (the *buddhadharmas*), but in terms of its non-dual nature, referred to in the *bhāṣya* as "the purification of suchness," "*tathatāviśuddhi*."

The ultimate nature of things, suchness (*tathatā*) or emptiness (*śūnyatā*), is hidden from the view of unenlightened beings by their own mental obstructions (*āvaraṇa*). Suchness, as the quintessential nature of things, has always been there. But sentient beings have not seen it because the impurity of their own minds obstructs it from view. According to Yogācāra texts such as the *MSA*, the Mahāyāna yogic path cultivates a gnosis which directly realizes suchness, gradually removing all mental obstructions until, at the moment of full enlightenment, gnosis realizes suchness in an inseparable, and uninterrupted way. Buddha, as *dharmakāya*, then assumes various appearances in the world to teach and assist beings; yet Buddha's mind never wavers from single-pointed concentration on suchness (*tathatā*, *śūnyatā*). All of this will be further discussed below. Here it suffices to say that *MSA* 9.4 with its *bhāṣya* deny that buddhahood is to be defined by, i.e. identified with, its various excellent qualities (*śukladharmāḥ*), because it is more properly identified as purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*). And this thesis is supported by a paradox: that all phenomena are both to be identified with buddhahood, and to be negated.

All phenomena, in their nature of suchness, "are buddhahood" (purified suchness), when the mental obstructions hiding their real nature

are removed. As the *bhāṣyakāra* notes, within suchness per se there is no differentiation (differentiation, as a product of conceptual thought, is not a quality of ultimate reality itself). Buddhahood being a non-dual realization of suchness, there can be no suchness separate or apart from buddhahood. Therefore, from the perspective of enlightenment, all phenomena in their nature of suchness are identified with buddhahood (*tathatāviśuddhi*). However, according to the *MSA* and other Yogācāra texts, the nature of phenomena imagined by unenlightened beings, e.g. conceptualized in terms of a separate subject and object of cognition, does not exist. The realization of buddhahood is also the realization of the non-existence of that imagined nature (*parikalpita svabhāva*). According to the *bhāṣya*, the line "there is no phenomenon at all" carries this sense.

All phenomena, then, are said to exist as buddhahood (in their suchness), and yet not to exist (in their imagined nature). In a parallel way, the verse's last two lines assert that the excellent qualities which a yogi cultivates to attain enlightenment (the undefiled *buddha dharmas*) make up buddhahood, but do not "define" it ("*na ca tais tan nirupyate*"), i.e. do not comprise its very essence. The *anāsrava dharmas*, as a set of excellent mental qualities, are defined and distinguished from each other through conceptual categories ("six perfections," "ten powers," etc.), "imagined" ("*parikalpita*") by the phenomenal, conceptual mind. The text affirms that they are cultivated up to the attainment of buddhahood. But as conceptually constructed qualities, they are the products of discursive thought, not ultimately real. The *bhāṣya* says that the excellent mental qualities ordinarily ascribed to the Buddha, the perfections

(*pāramitās*), etc., "have no perfect establishment by nature as perfections, etc." (*pāramitādi bhāvenāparinispatti*). Because of this, the *bhāṣya* says, they do not define (*nirdiśyate*) buddhahood. This implies that what does define buddhahood, unlike this set of mental qualities, is perfectly established by nature (*bhāvena parinispatti*), i.e. is ultimately real and not merely a conceptual construct. It is this which the *bhāṣya* identified in its first sentence as purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*).

Sthiramati's *Vṛttibhāṣya* on *MSA* 9.4 comments:

> Buddha[hood] is characterized by non-duality. How so? Duality concerns subject and object [of cognition]. At the time of enlightenment, the duality [of] subject and object is removed, hence it is "non-dual." In another way, duality concerns the pair: existence and non-existence. When enlightened, there is neither existence nor non-existence. Therefore it is "non-dual." How is there not existence? At enlightenment, the imagined characteristic which imagines a subject and object does not exist. How is there not non-existence? [At enlightenment,] the characteristic of perfected existence exists [tib. *yong su grub pa yod pa'i mtshan nyid yod pa*]. .... "All phenomena are buddha[hood]."[17] [Here,] "buddha[hood]" refers to the selflessness of persons, the selflessness of phenomena, and to phenomena as non-arising and non-ceasing. Amongst all phenomena, there is none which is without the two selflessnesses, or is not non-arising and non-ceasing. And Buddha's *dharmakāya*, being the nature of the two selflessnesses, the nature of non-arising and non-ceasing, there is not even the slightest bit of it which is other than in the nature of the two selflessnesses of all phenomena, of non-arising and of non-ceasing. Therefore, all phenomena are called "buddha[hood]." For this reason the *Ārya Vajracchedikā sūtra* says:

[17] The Tibetan translation of Sthiramati's commentary uses the word "*sangs rgyas*" (Buddha) where the Sanskrit and Tibetan translations of the *MSA* and *bhāṣya* use "*buddhatvam*" and "*sangs rgyas nyid*" (buddhahood).

Whoever sees me as [my] form,
Whoever knows me as [my] voice,
By having engaged in wrong practise,
Those beings do not see me.

As suchness [*tathatā*] are Buddhas seen,
The guides are the *dharmakāyas*,
The nature of dharma [*dharmatā*] being unknowable,
They are not to be discerned.[18]

... [Someone] may ask, "If all phenomena are buddha[hood], then all phenomena would have the nature of enlightened existence [in line with the statement above that at enlightenment, "the characteristic of perfected existence exists"]. So do [all] phenomena, like buddhahood, have that nature of existence?" [To answer that, the second line of the verse] says: "But there is no phenomenon at all." This means that phenomena having the characteristics imagined by childish common people, of subject and object, and of "vase", "blanket", etc., do not exist at all.

[The next line of the verse] says: "It consists of excellent qualities." [This is said because] buddha[hood] is first achieved through accomplishing the stages (*bhūmis*), perfections (*pāramitās*), the factors which foster enlightenment (*bodhipakṣas*). So at the time of enlightenment also, it continues to abide in the nature of the stages, perfections, factors which foster enlightenment, powers, forms of fearlessness, etc. In this sense it consists of excellent qualities. [Someone] may ask: "In that case is buddha[hood] just the nature of those perfections

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18 The Tibetan translation of this quote differs significantly from the available Sanskrit texts. The *Vṛttibhāṣya*, quoting the *Vajracchedikā* as translated above, reads: "*gang zhig nga la gzugs su blta* [*lta* in Peking Ed.]/ *gang zhig nga la dgra* [*sgra* in Peking Ed.] *ru rtogs/ log par zhugs pa song bas te/ skye bo de ni nga mi mthong//* de *bzhin nyid du sangs rgyas blta/ 'dren pa rnams ni chos kyi sku/ chos nyid shes par mi rung ste/ de dag rnam par rig mi 'gyur//* (sDe-dge mi fol. 108a4-5)." Conze's edition of the Sanskrit text reads: "*ye māṃ rūpeṇa ca-adrākṣur/ ye māṃ ghoṣeṇa ca-anvayuḥ/ mithyā-prahāṇa-prasṛtā/ na māṃ drakṣyanti te janāḥ// dharmato buddhā draṣṭavyā/ dharmakāya hi nāyakāḥ/ dharmatā ca na vijñeyā/ na sā śakyā vijānituṃ//* (Conze, *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, pp. 56-7). I translated Conze's Sanskrit text in the *Vajracchedikā* quote of the previous chapter. The Tibetan *Vṛttibhāṣya's* quote is corrupt (e.g. the mispelling of "*sgra*" in the sDe-dge edition, and different spellings of "*lta*" in the sDe-dge and Peking editions), but it also differs in substance sufficiently from the available Sanskrit to indicate that Sthiramati may have been quoting from a different edition of the *Vajracchedikā*.

(*pāramitās*)?" [To respond to this, the final line of the verse] says: "But it is not defined by them." Perfections (*pāramitās*) of imagined characteristic which are perceived under three aspects, e.g. a giver, a receiver and a gift, do not exist by their own intrinsic nature [S. *svabhāvataḥ nāsti*, T. *rang bzhin gyis yod pa ma yin*]. Therefore it can not be said with respect to a perfection (*pāramitā*) of imagined characteristic that it's nature is buddha[hood]. Why? Because buddha[hood] is not an imagined phenomena. The [lines of verse] up to here have explained the non-dual character [of buddhahood].[19]

Here, Sthiramati explores further the ontological aspect of buddhahood. When one is enlightened, he says, the imagined characteristic (*parikalpita lakṣaṇa*), which conceptually separates a subject and object of cognition, no longer exists. But the perfected characteristic (*pariniṣpanna lakṣaṇa*) very much exists.[20] We noted above *MSA* 9.4 *bhāṣya's* implication that what "defines" buddhahood is "perfectly established by nature," i.e. ultimately real, not merely a conceptual construct (*parikalpita*). What defines buddhahood, according to Sthiramati, is not something found not to exist at enlightenment (the imagined characteristic, *parikalpita lakṣaṇa*), but something found to exist (the perfected characteristic, *pariniṣpanna lakṣaṇa*). In line with

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19 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge mi, fols. 107b6-108b4.

20 Compare *MAV* 1.1 and its *bhāṣya* (Nagao, *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya*, pp. 17-18): *MAV* 1.1: "*abūta parikalpo 'sti dvayan tatra na vidyate/ śūnyatā vidyate tv atra tasyām api sa vidyate//.*" *bhāṣya*: - "*...evaṃ yad yatra nāsti tat tena śūnyam iti yathābhūtaṃ samanupaśyati yat punar atrāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhavati tat sad ihāstīti yathābhūtaṃ prajānātīty aviparītaṃ śūnyatā lakṣaṇam udbhāvitam bhavati/.*"
*MAV* 1.1 "The imagination of the unreal exists; duality is not found there. But emptiness is found there; and in that [emptiness] also is that [imagination] found." *bhāṣya* - "...One correctly observes that that in which a thing does not exist is empty of that thing [i.e. imagination of the unreal is empty of real duality]. [And] one knows further that that which remains, exists here truly [i.e. emptiness of duality exists truly]. Thus is the character of emptiness made known unmistakenly.

this he later comments that the perfections (*pāramitās*), as conceptual constructions (*parikalpita*), do not define buddhahood because they "do not exist by their own intrinsic nature" (San. *svabhāvataḥ nāsti*, Tib. *rang bzhin gyis yod pa ma yin*).

Sthiramati understands the statement "all phenomena are buddhahood" to mean that all phenomena are *nairātmya* (selfless), and that Buddha's *dharmakāya* is entirely that same nature. But since he has just said that all phenomena have the nature of selflessness, it would be trivial for him to say that the *dharmakāya* also has that nature, unless he means something special by it.[21] His vehemence in stating that "not even the slightest bit of [the *dharmakāya*] is other than in the nature of the two selflessnesses of phenomena" indicates that for him, a Buddha is identified with selflessness (emptiness, suchness) in a very special way which distinguishes him from other beings. Only a Buddha's gnosis realizes selflessness non-dualistically in a way which is inseparable, uninterrupted, and unceasing. It is only a Buddha's mind which in this sense so utterly identifies itself with ultimate reality. It is significant that Sthiramati employs the term "*dharmakāya*" precisely at this point. The *dharmakāya* is the Buddha's perfect, non-dual gnosis of selflessness. Using Yogācāra ontological categories (which will be further discussed below), from

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[21] If all Sthiramati intends to say here is that all phenomena are buddhahood because all phenomena are empty and buddhahood is empty, then for him, *MSA* 9.4's first line could have said, "All phenomena are house," or "All phemena are dog" with the same sense. Such a trivial interpretation of Sthiramati would have him read "all phenomena are x" to mean all phenomena have a nature of selflessness and so does x, where x stands for any phenomena. Clearly Sthiramati wants to say more than this with reference to the *dharmakaya*.

among the three natures of phenomena (the imagined nature, dependent nature, and perfected nature), buddhahood is free of the imagined nature (*parikalpita svabhāva*), and identified with the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna svabhāva*). Sthiramati's quote from the *Vajracchedikā sūtra* reiterates this by identifying the Buddha not with his appearance or voice but with the *dharmakāya* as suchness (*tathatā = pariniṣpanna svabhāva* in Yogācāra ontology).

Sthiramati acknowledges that buddhahood is understood to consist of a set of excellent qualities from a phenomenal point-of-view (i.e. the undefiled *buddhadharmas*, *anāsravadharmas*). But, at the same time, he reaffirms the *MSA's* statement that those qualities do not "define" buddhahood ("*tais tan na nirupyate*") . His reason is that qualities such as the six perfections, insofar as they are conceived through the imagined characteristic, as involving a subject and object, giver and receiver, etc., do not apply to buddhahood. When non-enlightened beings use terms like "the six perfections," "the ten powers," etc., they understand them to refer to subjects and objects, givers and receivers, etc., which exist by their own intrinsic nature (*svabhāvato 'sti*, *rang bzhin gyis yod pa*), independent of their mental labels. But in reality, according to Yogācāra philosophy, such categories are our own conceptual constructions, and in this sense, products of our own imagination (*parikalpita*, *kun brtags*). At enlightenment, non-duality is realized. This is the realization that subjects and objects of cognition, although appearing as separate entities, are actually separated only through the conceptual construction of the categories "subject" and "object." Realization of "non-duality" is also the

realization that no other conceptually constructed things (such as "vase," "blanket," etc.) exist by their own nature, apart from our conceptual construction (*parikalpita*) of them. According to Sthiramati, the very essence of buddhahood is the realization of this "non-duality." If it is the essence of a thing which defines it, it is this non-dual realization, fully attained at enlightenment, which "defines" buddhahood. The collection of *buddhadharmas*, a conceptually differentiated set of mental qualities, although descriptive of buddhahood from a phenomenal point-of-view, is not adequate to define buddhahood, to capture its essence. *MSA* 9.4 and Sthiramati's commentary on it are reminiscent of the *PP sūtras*, where the *dharmakāya* is identified closely with suchness and its realization, but is never identified directly with the collection of undefiled *buddha dharmas* (*anāsrava dharmas*) per se.

Near the end of this same ninth chapter of the *MSA*, the chapter focussing on enlightenment, verses 9.78-79 return to the question raised above in verse 9.4 concerning what exists and does not exist in enlightenment. In addition, they frame the question epistemologically in terms of what is and is not perceived. Looked at in their logical relation to 9.4, these verses also bear on the question of what defines (comprises the essence of) buddhahood and what does not. *MSA* 9.78-79 and their *bhāṣya* say:

Concerning the method of entry into buddhahood:[22]

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[22] This title in the Sanskrit *MSA bhāṣya* edited by S. Levi reads: "*buddhatvopāyapraveśe*," "[Concerning] entry into the method of buddhahood" (Levi, *MSA*, p.48). But the Tibetan translation of this differs slightly: "*sangs rgyas nyid la 'jug*

Non-existence itself is supreme existence,
Utter non-perception is the highest perception. *MSA* 9.78

Non-existence of the imagined nature is itself the supreme existence of the perfected nature. Utter non-perception of the imagined nature is itself the supreme perception of the perfected nature.

Those who do not see any meditation,
Have the supreme meditation.
Those who do not see any attainment,
Have the highest attainment. *MSA* 9.79

Non-perception of meditation is itself the supreme meditation. Non-perception of any attainment is itself the supreme attainment.[23]

Sthiramati's *Vṛttibhāṣya* comments:

[Quoting the first line of *MSA* verse 9.78:] "Total non-existence is itself supreme existence." Upon [attaining] the first

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*pa'i thabs*," "[Concerning] the method of entry into buddhahood" (*MSA bhasya*, sDe-dge phi, fol. 161a6-7). The *Vṛttibhāṣya* agrees better with the Tibetan translation. It reads: "*sangs rgyas su 'gyur ba'i thabs*," [Concerning] the method of becoming Buddha" (sDe-dge mi, fol. 144a2). Asvabhāva's *MSA ṭīkā* also agrees with the Tibetan translation, reading: "*sangs rgyas nyid de la ji ltar 'jug pa de'i thabs kyi dbang du byas nas*," "Concerning the method of how to enter into buddhahood" (sDe-dge bi, fol. 75a6). The content of the four verses and their commentaries concern meditation on non-perception as a principle method by which bodhisattvas traverse the stages to buddhahood and then attain it. It would appear, then, that the *MSA bhāṣya* manuscript which was translated into Tibetan read: "buddhatvapraveśopāye." The Sanskrit manuscript edited by Levi, having reversed the words "upāya" and "praveśa," would appear to be mistaken.

[23] Levi, *MSA* 78-79 and *bhāṣya*: "*buddhatvopāyapraveśe catvāraḥ ślokāḥ/*
*yā 'vidyamānatā saiva paramā vidyamānatā/*
*sarvathā 'nupalambhaśca upalambhaḥ paro mataḥ// 78 //*
*yā parikalpitena svabhāvenāvidyamānatā saiva paramā vidyamānatā pariniṣpannena svabhāvena/ yaśca sarvathā 'anupalambhaḥ parikalpitasya svabhāvasya sa eva parama upalambhaḥ pariniṣpannasvabhāvasya/*
*bhāvanā paramā ceṣṭā bhāvanāmavipaśyatāṃ/*
*pratilambhaḥ paraśceṣṭaḥ pratilambhaṃ na paśyatāṃ// 79 //*
*saiva paramā bhāvanā yo bhāvanāyā anupalambhaḥ/ sa eva paramaḥ pratilambho yaḥ pratilambhānupalambhaḥ/.*"

> stage (*bhūmi*), one realizes the non-existence of the imagined nature. The imagined subject-object nature has become non-existent for the first [time], and that itself is named "the supreme existence." Why? Because it is the existence of the perfected characteristic which is free of subject-object [duality]. [Quoting the second line of *MSA* verse 9.78:] "Utter non-perception is the supreme perception." Upon [attaining] the first stage (*bhūmi*), one does not perceive the imagined nature, does not perceive what is conceptualized as a self, a "mine," a phenomena. That non-seeing itself is called "the supreme perception." Why? Because at that time one perceives, one sees, the perfected characteristic which is free of subject-object [duality].[24]

Sthiramati relates the verses to the stages of yogic realization of ultimate reality up to the attainment of full enlightenment. Here he says that when a bodhisattva first enters into a direct yogic realization of emptiness (which in Yogācāra soteriology occurs at the attainment of the first stage), the subject-object duality "imagined" by his own mind ceases to appear, revealing the ultimate non-existence of any such duality. What then appears is what does ultimately exist, the absence of duality, the "perfected nature." The "perfected nature," then, is precisely the non-existence of the "imagined nature," the nature falsely imagined to exist. Similarly, when the yogi does not see any real subject-object duality, i.e. when he "sees through" the imagined nature, he sees clearly; he has the best perception, perception of the perfected nature. Realization of the non-existence of the one reveals the existence of the other. Sthiramati continues:

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24 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge mi, fol. 144a3-6.

> [Quoting the first line of *MSA* verse 9.79:] "Not seeing meditations is the supreme meditation." From the second stage [*bhūmi*] up to the tenth stage, the conceptions of subject-object [duality], of "I," and of "mine," are abandoned. Making this one's meditation repeatedly without seeing duality is the highest meditation. Why? Because it is meditation on the characteristic of non-perception. [Quoting the second line of *MSA* 9.79:] "Not seeing any attainment is the supreme attainment." Upon reaching the Buddha stage there is the highest attainment: the not seeing of any attainment of *sāmbhogikakāya*, of *nairmāṇikakāya*, or of [*buddha*] *dharmas* such as the [ten] powers and the [four] fearlessnesses. Why is that? Because it is the supreme attainment, the highest of all dharmas, the *dharmakāya*.[25]

Sthiramati continues to describe the rest of the stages of yogic realization prior to buddhahood (second to tenth stages) as repeated meditation on non-duality and selflessness, on the non-perception of the imagined nature referred to above as the "supreme perception." Finally, the attainment of buddhahood is described as the logical extension of this same yogic process. It is a yogic realization which does not see any of the attainments ordinarily ascribed to buddhahood. Those aspects of buddhahood which appear dualistically to other beings (the form *kāyas*)

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25 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge mi, fol. 144a6-b1: *sgom pa dag ni mi mthong ste/ /sgom pa yi ni mchog tu 'dod/ /zhes bya ba la/ sa gnyis nas sa bcu man chad kyi tshe gzung ba dang 'dzin pa dang nga dang bdag gir rtog pa spangs te/ sgom par byed pa dang sgom par byed pa gnyis mi mthong bar sgom pa [gnyis]* sgom pa'i mchog tu 'dod de/ ci'i phyir zhe na/ dmigs su med pa'i mtshan nyid bsgom pa'i phyir/ /rnyed pa dag ni ma mthong na/ /rnyed pa yang ni mchog tu 'dod/ /ces bya ba la/ sangs rgyas kyi sa'i dus na rdzogs longs spyod pa'i sku dang/ sprul pa'i sku dang/ stobs dang mi 'jigs pa la sogs pa'i chos rnyed par ma mthong ba nyid rnyed pa'i mchog ces bya ste/ ci'i phyir zhes na/ chos kun gyi mchog chos kyi sku rnyed pa'i mchog go/.*" I read the starred word "*gnyis*" as a "*nyid.*" This accords with the exactly parallel constructions at mi 144a4 ("*kun brtags pa dang por med par gyur pa de nyid yod pa'i mchog ces gdags te/*"), mi 144a5 ("*mi dmigs te ma mthong ba nyid dmigs pa'i mchog ces bya/*"), and mi 144b1 ("*chos rnyed par ma mthong ba nyid rnyed pa'i mchog ces bya ste/*"), and such scribal errors as "*gnyis*" for "*nyid*" are extremely common in Tibetan translations.

or are dualistically conceptualized and labelled by other beings (the undefiled *buddha dharmas*) are not seen at the attainment of buddhahood. Buddhahood in itself does not involve any such conceptual construction. It is the "supreme attainment." And as the culmination of the yogic process thusfar described, it is the final "supreme perception" of "supreme existence," i.e. the final realization of the perfected nature, the *dharmakāya*.

*MSA* 9.78-79 and their commentaries clarify further the statement at the beginning of the same chapter (vs. 9.4) that buddhahood is not "defined" by the collection of his mental qualities, the *buddha dharmas*. The defining quality of buddhahood, its essence, is not a set of conceptually differentiated qualities, no matter how exalted they may be within Buddhist tradition. Rather buddhahood's essence is its non-dual realization of ultimate reality (*śūnyatā*, *tathatā*, *pariniṣpanna*), its realization of the emptiness of all phenomena, including all phenomena traditionally ascribed to buddhahood. It is this essence which is referred to as the "*dharmakāya*." The Yogācāra formulation recapitulates the *PP sūtras'* teaching on *dharmakāya*. Commentators such as Sthiramati explicitly placed this teaching within a classical Yogācāra framework, emphasizing the non-duality of subject and object and the realization of *pariniṣpanna*. Similar accounts of *dharmakāya* and buddhahood can be found throughout Yogācāra literature.[26]

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26 See, for example, *Msg* 10.3.1 with Asvabhāva's comments (Lamotte's numbering system); Asvabhāva's comments on *Msg* 9.1 (*Upanibandhana*, sDe-dge ri, fols. 273b3-274a3), and *Msg* 10.27 (*Upanibandhana*, sDe-dge ri, fols. 286a6-7); Sthiramati's *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣyaṃ* (Levi's edition, commentary on vss. 28-30, pp. 43-44);

## 3. The Six Category Analysis of Buddhahood in Yogācāra: The "Svabhāva" Category Corresponding to "Svābhāvikakāya"

A number of important themes emerge in the *MSA* verses and commentaries above, and we will have reason to return to several of them again. One such theme is the distinction drawn between the very essence of buddhahood, its intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), on the one hand, and the set of qualities traditionally ascribed to it on the other (the undefiled *buddha dharmas*, *rūpakāyas*, etc.). As we have seen, according to these texts, the set of varied qualities traditionally ascribed to buddhahood do not define it. What does define it is its very essence, its intrinsic nature, identified as *tathatā viśuddhi* (purified suchness), *pariniśpanna* (the perfected nature), and as the non-dual realization of suchness, *dharmakāya*.

Buddhahood's essence on the one hand and its adjunct qualities on the other comprise two of the six categories set forth in an analysis of buddhahood which is distinctive of the Yogācāra school. According to this Yogācāra scheme, buddhahood is described in terms of the following six categories: 1. its essence or intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), 2. its cause

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Vasubandhu's *Triśvabhāvakārikā* vss. 36-38; Jñānacandra's *Kāyatrayavṛtti* (Pk 5291, Vol.101, fols. 122-4-6 - 122-5-1); *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* (Nishio edition) pp. 59, 117-118, 122-3. Such passages describe buddhahood or *dharmakāya* as the final yogic realization of *tathatā* by *nirvikalpajñāna*, the removal of *parikalpita* by *nirvikalpajñāna* to reveal *pariniṣpanna*, the indivisibility of *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna*, etc.

(*hetu*), 3. its result (*phala*), 4. its activity (*karma*), 5. its endowment (*yoga*), and 6. its operational modes (*vṛtti*).[27] Among these, buddhahood's essence is the first category (*svabhāva*) and its adjunct qualities comprise the fifth category (*yoga*). *MSA* 21.60-61 and *bhāṣya* say:

> You have accomplished the ultimate,
> You have issued from all the stages (*bhūmis*)
> You have obtained preeminence among all beings,
> You are the liberator of all beings. *MSA* 21.60
>
> Endowed with inexhaustible, unequalled excellences,
> You are beheld in the worlds and in the assemblies,
> Yet are entirely invisible to gods and men. *MSA* 21.61
>
> *bhāṣya*: Here Buddha's characteristics are explained through six topics: essence, cause, result, activity, endowment, and operational modes. Purified suchness (*viśuddhā tathatā*) is the ultimate which is accomplished (*niṣpannaḥ paramārthaḥ*), and that is the essence (*svabhāva*) of the Buddhas. Their cause (*hetu*) is their issuance out of all the bodhisattva stages. Their result (*phala*) is obtainment of preeminence among all beings. Their activity (*karma*) is the liberating of all beings. Their endowment (*yoga*) is the possession of inexhaustible, incomparable qualities. Their operational modes (*vṛtti*) are three-fold: being seen in the various world realms through the Emanation Body

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[27] This special six-fold analysis of buddhahood occurs in *MSA* and *bhāṣya* 9.56-59 and 21.60-61, the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra* and its *vyākhyāna* by Śīlabhadra (Nishio, pp. 22-23 and 119-127), and *Msg* (10.27). The same six-fold analysis is also applied to meanings of terms in general in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (Griffiths, "Buddha and God," p. 4). All of these texts are Yogācārin. The application of this analysis to buddhahood seems to be one of the distinctive features of Yogācāra buddhology. The same analysis with the addition of four categories forms one of the primary methods of describing *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (vss. 1.29 ff.) With the addition of two categories, the same six-fold scheme is the primary description of buddhahood (*nirmalā tathatā*) in the same text (vss. 2.2 ff.). This is one of the reasons why it appears that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* has close connections to the developments in Buddhist thought which were formative of the Yogācāra school (see Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 400 ff.).

(*nirmāṇakāya*), being seen among the assemblies through the Enjoyment Body (*sāmbhogikakāya*), but being utterly invisible in the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*).[28]

In this six-fold analysis, Buddha's qualities, e.g. the undefiled buddha dharmas, are classified as his "endowment," but not as his essence, his essence being only purified suchness (*viśuddhā tathatā*). Buddhahood, though "endowed with" the undefiled buddha qualities, is not directly identified with them. Although phenomenally it is conceptualized by sentient beings as possessed of many things ("inexhaustible excellences"), in its unmanifest essence, it is a simple, undifferentiated thing: purified suchness (*viśuddhā tathatā*).

According to the *bhāṣya*, Buddha's operational modes (*vṛtti*) are three-fold: Emanation Body (or the "Body as Emanation," *nairmāṇikakāya*), Body of Shared Enjoyment (or "Body in its Shared Enjoyment," *sāmbhogikakāya*), and Dharma Body (or "Body of Dharma," *dharmakāya*). Among these, the *dharmakāya*, being "utterly invisible to gods and men," is equivalent to the essence of buddhahood (*svabhāva*), the accomplishment of the ultimate (*niṣpannaḥ paramārthaḥ*). Buddhahood appears endowed with excellences when manifesting to others, as *nairmāṇikakāya* or *sāmbhogikakāya*. But as *dharmakāya*, the

[28] Levi, *MSA* and *bhāṣya* 21.60-61: "*niṣpannaparamārtho 'si sarvabhūmiviniḥsṛtaḥ/ sarvasatvāgratāṃ prāptaḥ sarvasatvavimocakaḥ// akṣayairasamairyukto guṇairlokeṣu dṛśyase/ maṇḍaleṣvapyadṛśyaśca sarvathā devamānuśaiḥ// atra ṣaḍbhiḥ svabhāvahetuphalakarmayogavṛttyarthairbuddhalakṣaṇam paridīpitam/ tatra viśuddhā tathatā niṣpannaḥ paramārthaḥ/ sa ca buddhānām svabhāvaḥ/ sarvabodhisatvabhūminiryātatvam hetuḥ/ sarvasatvāgratām prāptatvam phalam/ sarvasatvavimocakatvam karma/ akṣayāsamaguṇayuktatvam yogaḥ/ nānālokadhātuṣu dṛśyamānatā nirmāṇakāyena parṣanmaṇḍaleṣvapi dṛśyamānatā sāṃbhogikena kāyena/sarvathā cādṛśyamānatā dharmakāyeneti trividhā prabhedavṛttiriti/.*"

unmanifest realization of the ultimate, purified suchness, it is invisible to others.

*MSA* 9.56-59 apply the same six-fold analysis to the "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*," "the purity of the dharma realm." According to these verses, the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* includes the suchness (*tathatā*) and the gnosis (*jñāna*) of full enlightenment, its activity, all of its qualities and all three *kāyas*. Without question, therefore, in this text, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* is to be understood as buddhahood in its entirety, though the term particularly emphasizes its aspect of purity (as does the term for buddhahood used throughout the earlier portion of the same chapter: "*anāsravadhātu*", "the undefiled realm").

According to the *bhāṣya*, *MSA* 9.56 explains the first of the six categories, *svabhāva*, the essence of buddhahood, identifying that essence as *tathatā viśuddhi* (purified suchness) and *jñāna* (gnosis). Verses 9.56-58 explain the second through fifth categories analytical of buddhahood (cause, result, activity, and endowment). Then verse 9.59 explains the sixth category, *vṛtti*, operational modes (the three *kāya* theory). Significantly, this verse and its *bhāṣya* use the term for the first category analytical of buddhahood, "*svabhāva*," "essence", in making the name for the first *buddhakāya*: "*svābhāvikakāya*," meaning "the *kāya* in its essence," or the "Essence Body". The implication is that the first of the

three *kāyas* is buddhahood as it is in its very essence: purified suchness and gnosis.[29]

The same two verses quoted earlier, *MSA* 21.60-61, are quoted in the last chapter of the *Msg*, the chapter on "Resultant Gnosis" ("'*Bras bu ye shes*," section 10.27 concerning the qualities of the Dharma Body). The *Msg* quotes *MSA* 20.60-61 as above, analyzing buddhahood in terms of the six categories. The *Msg's* brief preface to these two verses says:

> Furthermore, [the Dharma Body] has the following qualities: essence, cause, result, activity, endowment, and operational modes. Thus the qualities of the Buddhas are to be known as unsurpassed.[30]

Asvabhāva's commentary says:

> Explanatory of these verses [*MSA* 21.60-61] is [the *Msg's* statement:] "Furthermore, the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) has the following six qualities: essence, etc." The verse: "You have accomplished the ultimate," means that in its essence (*svabhāva*) the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) is completely perfected, because it consists of purified suchness (*viśuddhā tathatā*)."[31]

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29 Levi, *MSA* and *bhāṣya* 9.59: "*svabhāvadharmasaṃbhoganirmāṇairbhinnavṛttikaḥ/ dharmadhāturviśuddho 'yaṃ buddānāṃ samudāhṛtaḥ// eṣa vṛttyarthamārabhya caturthaḥ ślokaḥ/ svābhāvikasāṃbhogikanairmāṇikakāyavṛttyā bhinnavṛttikaḥ/*."

30 Lamotte, *Msg* Vol.1, p.90: "*sangs rgyas rnams kyi chos kyi sku ni yon tan 'di dag dang ldan no// gzhan yang ngo bo nyid dang/ rgyu dang/ 'bras bu [dang] phrin las dang/ ldan pa dang/ 'jug pa'i yon tan rnams dang yang ldan te/ de lta bas na sangs rgyas rnams kyi yon tan bla na med par rig par bya'o//.*"

31 *Msg upanibandhana*, sDe-dge ri, fols. 286a6-b1: "*chos kyi sku ni gzhan yang ngo bo nyid dang zhes bya ba la sogs pa yon tan drug dang ldan no zhes bstan nas tsigs su bcad pa 'di dag gis 'chad do/ /kyod ni dam pa'i don grub ste/ /zhes bya ba ni rnam par dag pa'i de bzhin nyid kyis rab tu phye ba'i [S. prabhāvita] phyir ngo bo nyid kyis chos kyi sku yongs su grub pa'i phyir ro/ .*"

According to Asvabhāva, Buddha's enlightenment as the *dharmakāya*, in its very essence (*svabhāva*), is purified suchness. As such it is invisible to gods and men. The Sanskrit terms "*svabhāva*" and "*dharmakāya*" are aligned here, their meanings closely interrelated. The *dharmakāya*, though it is the basis of the two form *kāyas* which manifest for gods and men, is in essence (*svābhāvika*) invisible, purified suchness. The Yogācāra texts commonly name the first of the three *kāyas* either "*dharmakāya*" or "*svābhāvikakāya*," using the names in such contexts synonymously.

Thus, the first category analytical of buddhahood in Yogācāra texts, "*svabhāva*" (the essence of enlightenment), corresponds to what is elsewhere called "*svābhāvikakāya*" (the "Essence Body" or the "Body in its Essence"). If the latter term derived its name from the former term, it would mean that the six category analysis and three *kāya* theory were closely related theoretical developments in Yogācāra circles. The sixth category, "*vṛtti*" (operational modes), consists of the three *kāyas* taken together, the essence (*svabhāva*) which is the first *kāya*, together with the manifestations of that essence, the other two *kāyas*.

The listing of the undefiled *buddha dharmas* within Yogācāra texts, therefore, represents a preservation of an older, pre-Yogācāra description of buddhahood, while the six category analysis and three *kāya* theory appear to be distinctive Yogācāra developments. We saw that in earlier Abhidharma traditions the list of *buddha dharmas* was presented as the fundamental description of buddhahood. Largely the same list of dharmas is retained in the Yogācāra scheme, where it is taken to constitute

a phenomenal description of buddhahood, but not as a description of its very essence. For this reason the list is slotted within the six category scheme as "*yoga*," "endowment," rather than as "*svabhāva*," "essence."

The six category scheme, in effect, separates out the pre-Yogācāra model of buddhahood, the list of *buddha dharmas*, from the specifically Yogācāra model: the theory of three *kāyas*. In the Yogācāra scheme, the first *kāya* is the invisible and undifferentiated essence of buddhahood, the first of the six categories: *svabhāva* (= *svābhāvikakāya*), while the other two *kāyas* represent the way in which that invisible essence manifests to others (non-Buddhas). These three *kāyas* comprise the sixth category, *vṛtti* (operational modes). The list of undefiled *buddha dharmas* per se is not an integral part of this three *kāya* structure. As an older, Abhidharma description of enlightenment, a place is kept for the *buddha dharmas* within the Yogācāra scheme as a description of buddhahood which retains validity from a phenomenal perspective while no longer adequate to serve as its definition. In the Yogācāra scheme, the defining feature of buddhahood, its essence (*svabhāva*), must be presented from an ultimate perspective, conforming to the general Mahāyāna concept of enlightenment as primarily a non-dual realization of ultimate reality. The essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood is therefore identified in Yogācāra as a simple ultimate realization, *viśuddhā tathatā*, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, etc., corresponding to the *svābhāvikakāya*.

4. The "Kāya of the Buddhas" - In its Unmanifest Essence (Svābhāvika) and in its Manifestations (Sāmbhogika, Nairmāṇika). The Significance of the Taddhita Forms of the Kāya Names.

As discussed just above, *MSA* vss. 9.56-59 analyze buddhahood as *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* ("the purity of the dharma realm") through the six categories: essence (*svabhāva*), cause (*hetu*), result (*phala*), activity (*karma*), endowment (*yoga*), and operational modes (*vṛtti*). Vs. 9.59 treats the sixth topic, operational modes (*vṛtti*). *MSA* vss. 9.60-66 and their *bhāṣya* then discuss this topic in greater detail, by reference to the three-fold *kāya* theory. It is the *MSA*'s explanation of this topic which provides its primary explanation of the three *kāya* theory, which is one of the earliest and most fundamental analyses of the theory in Yogācāra Buddhism.[32] Importantly, in its primary formulation, this is a theory not of three things (three "*kāyas*"), but of one thing (one "*kāya*") which operates under three modes. The one thing, referred to alternatively as "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*" (the purified dharma realm) or "the *kāya* of the Buddhas", is buddhahood. Its three modes are the way it exists in its very essence (*svābhāvika*), the way it shares its enjoyment of dharma (*sāmbhogika*), and the way it emanates into the worlds of living beings (*nairmāṇika*).

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32 The verses which appear as 9.56-59 in the *MSA* also appear at the end of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, where they are commented upon by Śīlabhadra in his *vyākhyāna* on that sūtra. We will refer both to the commentaries on the *MSA* and to Śīlabhadra's commentary on the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* in what follows.

Strictly speaking, then, in what is probably the earliest formulation of "the three *kāya* theory", there are not three "*kāyas*." There is one "*kāya*" (simply undifferentiated buddhahood) which operates under three modes. This emphasizes the ontological indivisibility of full enlightenment; the idea that, in essence, it is an undifferentiated ultimate realization. Divisions are not ascribed to it on the basis of any distinct parts, but are drawn with reference to the different modes ("*vṛtti*") under which it exists and is encountered by Buddhas and non-Buddhas.[33]

In the passages which introduce the three *kāya* theory, then, it is first explained that buddhahood is ontologically one; one "*kāya*," operating under three modes. And it is only after this explanation that there is reference in later passages of the *MSA bhāṣya*, its commentaries and other Yogācāra commentaries to "three *kāyas*" in the plural form. Later references to "three *kāyas*," then, presume the earlier formulation that the "three" are actually three operational modes of one, essentially indivisible thing, referred to as "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*," or "*kāya buddhānām*" ("the *kāya* of the Buddhas").

Because the verses numbered 9.59-60 in the *MSA* are perhaps the earliest extant literary sources to formalize the three *kāya* theory, it is important to examine them and their *bhāṣya* closely in the Sanskrit. For comparison, we will also examine Śilabhadra's exegisis of the verse in the

[33] This explanation is based on *MSA* 9.59-60 and *bhāṣya*. The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* verse equivalent to *MSA* 9.59 and its *vyākhyāna* give the equivalent explanation (Nishio, pp. 125-6).

*Buddhabhūmisūtra* which corresponds to 9.59 in the *MSA*. First, the *MSA*:

> *svabhāvadharmasambhoganirmāṇairbhinnavṛttikaḥ/*
> *dharmadhāturviśuddho 'yam buddhānāṃ samudāhṛtaḥ/*
> *MSA* 9.59
>
> This is declared to be the purified dharma realm (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*) of the Buddhas, whose mode of operation is divided from [the point of view of] essence, shared enjoyment of dharma, and emanation.
>
> *eṣa vṛttyarthamārabhya caturthaḥ ślokaḥ/*
> *svābhāvikasāṃbhogikanairmāṇikakāyavṛttyā bhinnavṛttikaḥ/*
> *MSA* 9.59 *bhāṣya*
>
> This fourth verse concerns mode of operation (*vṛtti*) as the topic. The mode of operation is differentiated through the *kāya's* operational mode in its very essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation.

*MSA* vs. 9.59 focusses on *vṛtti*, the last of the six categories discussed above analytical of buddhahood. "*Vṛtti*" is a primary (*kṛt*) derivative of the verbal root "*vṛt*," whose most basic meaning is "to exist." "*Vṛtti*" has numerous meanings, a few of which are: "mode of life or conduct, course of action, behavior; mode of being, nature, kind, character, disposition; state, condition; activity, function."[34] Takasaki translates *vṛtti* "manifestation," the "manifestation" of the three *kāyas*.[35] Though such a translation applies to the two form *kāyas*, it does not apply to the *svābhāvikakāya*, which is formless and invisible. In fact, as we noted

34 Monier-Williams, pp. 109-10.
35 Takasaki, pp. 229 ff., 324 ff.

above, one of the *svābhāvikakāya's* distinguishing features is precisely that it is not manifest "to gods and men." I chose the translation "mode of operation" or "operational mode," because in this context "*vṛtti*" seems to refer to the operational modes under which buddhahood functions for the one who has realized it and for others.

It is important to note the way in which the *MSA bhāṣya* derives the particular morphological structure of the three *kāya* names characteristic of Yogācāra literature. *MSA* 9.59 presents the three terms out of which the three *kāya* names are made in *kṛt* (primary derivative) form, as nouns, forming a *dvandva* (copulative) compound in *tṛtīyā vibhakti* (instrumental case): "*(svabhāva)...(saṃbhoga)(nirmānaiḥ).*"[36] Here the terms are nouns because they are the names of the three categories under which what is basically one (buddhahood) will be understood as three-fold: "essence", "shared enjoyment", and "emanation".

The *bhāṣya* to 9.59 then converts these three nouns into the *taddhita* (secondary derivative) form as adjectives modifying the noun phrase "*kāyavṛtti*": "*(svābhāvika)(sāṃbhogika)(nairmāṇika) kāyavṛtti*," "the *kāya's* mode of operation in its very essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation." This *taddhita*, broadly adjectival form is precisely the form in which the three *kāya* names generally occur in the earliest extant Sanskrit literature available.[37] The *MSA bhāṣya's* derivation of the

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[36] According to the *bhāṣya* to *MSA* 9.60, the word "dharma" in the compound of verse 9.59 (*svabhāva[dharma]saṃbhoganirmānair*) is logically connected to the term"*saṃbhoga*" ("*dharmasaṃbhogam*" meaning "the shared enjoyment of the dharma"), and is therefore not a key term in the basic derivation of the three *kāya* names.

[37] In the earliest treatises extant in Sanskrit which explained the trikāya theory in detail, the *MSA*, *Ratnagotravibhaga*, and *AA* (and those of their commentaries extant in

adjectival form of the names implies that the three key terms ("*svābhāvika*", "*sāmbhogika*", "*nairmāṇika*") function as three modifiers of the one noun "*kāya*" ("*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," "*nairmāṇikakāya*"), where "*kāya*" designates one, basic, undivided thing. In other words, the noun "*kāya*" is modified by three qualifiers in *taddhita* form to indicate that there is ontologically one thing (the undifferentiated *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, buddhahood) operating under three modes: as it is in its essence (*svābhāvika*), in its shared enjoyment of dharma (*sāmbhogika*), and in its emanation throughout the worlds (*nairmāṇika*).

*MSA* 9.60 and its *bhāṣya* are even more explicit in explaining the particular morphology of the *kāya* names:

> *svābhāviko 'tha sāṃbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko 'paraḥ/*
> *kāyabhedā hi buddhānāṃ prathamastu dvayāśrayaḥ/* *MSA* 9.60
>
> Thus the divisions of the body of the Buddhas are: the body in its essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation as well. But the first is the basis of the [other] two//

Sanskrit), the three terms under discussion generally appear in *taddhita*, adjectival form: "*svābhāvika*", "*sāmbhogika*", "*nairmāṇika*", not in the *kṛt* forms: "*svabhāva*," "*sambhoga*," "*nirmāna*." See: *MSA* vss. 60-66 and *bhāṣya*; *AA* chapter 8 vss. 1, 12, 33 and *AA-Āloka*, Wogihara edition, pp. 914-924; *RGV-vyākhyāna*, p. 85.9. Sthiramati preserves the *taddhita* forms in his *Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā* (Yamaguchi edition, p.191). The *taddhita* forms are even reflected in the Tibetan translation of the *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio p. 125. The *Msg* is not extant in Sanskrit, but its exposition of three *kāyas* is based largely on that of the *MSA*.

*trividhaḥ kāyo buddhānām/ svābhāviko dharmakāya āśrayaparāvṛttilakṣaṇaḥ/ sāmbhogiko yena parṣanmaṇḍaleṣu dharmasambhogaṃ karoti/ nairmāṇiko yena nirmāṇena sattvārthaṃ karoti/* MSA 9.60 *bhāṣya*

The body of the Buddhas is threefold, [being]: 1. In essence (*svābhāvika*), the *dharmakāya*, whose characteristic is fundamental transformation. 2. in shared enjoyment (*sāmbhogika*), that through which it brings enjoyment of dharma to the circles of assembly. 3. as emanation (*nairmāṇika*), the emanation through which it works for the benefit of beings.

As noted above, throughout the earliest extant Sanskrit literature in which the three *kāyas* are named, the names generally appear in the *taddhita* forms we see here. It is in *MSA* 9.60 and its *bhāṣya* that the reason for that characteristic morphology is most clearly presented. In verse 9.60 the expression "*kāya ... buddhānām*" substitutes for the expression "*dharmadhātuviśuddha ... buddhānām*" of verse 9.59. The terms *dharmadhātuviśuddha*(*-i*) and "*kāya*" are understood to be interchangable. Note also how the first half of vs. 9.60 explicitly puts the word "*kāya*" in the singular; a singular noun modified by three adjectives: "*svābhāvika,*" "*sāmbhogika,*" "*nairmāṇika.*" In this verse the *taddhita* form of those three words is meant to indicate a broadly adjectival function. As three adjectives, they modify <u>one thing</u>, the *kāya* (singular) of the Buddhas (vs. 9.60), which is the same thing as the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* of the Buddhas (vs. 9.59).

The *bhāṣya* to *MSA* 9.60 further clarifies the adjectival function of the *taddhita* forms. "The *kāya*" of the Buddhas again is singular, referring to enlightenment as a single entity. The threefold differentiation is indicated by modifiers of that singular noun, each in *taddhita* form: The one *kāya*:

"*svābhāvika*," "in essence", is simply the *dharmakāya*; "*sāmbhogika*," "in shared enjoyment," manifests to give enjoyment to the circles of assembly (i.e. bodhisattvas in the pure realms); and "*nairmāṇika*," "as emanation," manifests for beings at large.

Note also in the *bhāṣya* to vs. 9.60 that the grammatical subject of all the verbs is the same single, thing: the *kāya* (body) of the Buddhas. The *kāya* of the Buddhas is the *dharmakāya* in essence (*svābhāvika*). It brings enjoyment to the circles of assembly in one type of manifestation (*sāmbhogika*) and it works to benefit beings through its other type of manifestation (*nairmāṇika*).

In this fundamental, and perhaps earliest Yogācāra formulation of the three *kāya* theory, enlightenment exists in its essence as an unmanifest entity (*svābhāvika)* which appears in two ways to other beings (*sāmbhogika*, *nairmāṇika*). Enlightenment as one entity, understood under those three modes, is the "three-fold *kāya*." The first mode (*svābhāvika*) is simply enlightenment as it is realized. It is the very essence of what a Buddha is, formless, unmanifest, comprehensible only to itself. The other two modes (*sāmbhogika*, *nairmāṇika*) are the forms in which enlightenment manifests for non-Buddhas who have the spiritual merit to perceive it, but not the merit to realize it themselves.[38] In other

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[38] This hearkens back to the *PP sūtras*' opposition of *dharmakāya* to *rūpakāya* which we saw earlier (the *dharmakāya* being what Buddha actually is; the *rūpakāya* being what fools think he is). Typical in Yogācāra literature is the description of the *svābhāvikakāya* as "*pratyātmavedam*" ("known only to oneself," to Buddha, not to others) and as "*acintya*" ("beyond conception"). See, for example, *Msg* 10.3.5, 10.28.10; *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣyam* (Levi edition) p. 44; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* (Nishio) p.125, *Kāyatrayastotra* vs. 1; *Kāyatrayasūtra* Pk 949 Vol. 37, fol. 108-3-2; *RGV* 2.42. *MSA* 9.62 describes the *svābhāvikakāya* as "subtle" (*sukṣma*), Sthiramati explaining this to

words, the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are the modes through which enlightenment operates to help the world.

After it is established that what is being discussed is one thing under three modes, not three separate things, the terminology becomes looser and the expression "three *kāyas*" in the plural form begins to appear (*MSA* 9.65).[39] Still, the fundamental formulation of the theory as one indivisible realization of enlightenment existing under three operational modes is preserved both in the usage of the terms and in the *taddhita* forms of the three *kāya* names. In the Sanskrit literature, even when discussed in the plural, the *kāyas* are most often referred to as the "*svābhāvikakāya*" (the *kāya* in its essence), the "*sāmbhogikakāya*" (the *kāya* in its shared enjoyment) and "*nairmāṇikakāya*" (the *kāya* as emanation), i.e. each term refers to the same, single *kāya* in one of its three different aspects. The terms do not generally appear in the *kṛt* forms: "*svabhāvakāya*," "*sambhogakāya*," "*nirmāṇakāya*", (which might tend to connote three separate things, three different "bodies," rather than three modes of one thing, "the body").

The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* (Nishio, pp. 125-6), commenting on the verse in the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* which is the exact equivalent of *MSA* 9.59, also explains buddhahood as one, undifferentiated *kāya* (the "*tathatāgatakāya*," equated with the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*) qualified by three terms which signify its three operational modes (Tib. "*rang bshin*

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mean that it is not a cognitive object for Śrāvakas or Pratyekabuddhas (*vṛttibhāṣya* sDe dge mi, fols. 166b5-6).

[39] *MSA* 9.65, for example: "*tribhiḥ kāyaistu vijñeyo buddhānaṃ kāyasaṃgrahaḥ/ sāśrayaḥ svaparārtho yastribhiḥ kāyairnirdiśitaḥ//*

*pa"* = *svābhāvika*, *"longs spyod pa pa"* = *sāmbhogika*, and *"sprul pa pa"* = *nairmāṇika*). Only after it is made clear that the three are three modes of one, undifferentiated thing, rather than three separate things, does it refer to the three in the plural as "the three *kāyas*" presuming that understanding.

What is the broader significance of this? We noted earlier how some *Abhidharmikas* defined the essence of buddhahood as the set of *buddhadharmas* (the ten powers, four fearlessnesses, great compassion, etc.). At the beginning of this chapter, we noted how Haribhadra seems to have referred back to that tradition by defining the first two of his four *kāyas* as the set of undefiled *buddhadharmas* (comprising the *[jñāna] dharmakāya*) and the emptiness of those undefiled dharmas (the *svābhāvikakāya*). Haribhadra defined buddhahood in terms of a collection of many mental qualties and their ultimate empty nature. But the basic Yogācāra tri-*kāya* theory enunciated above, whose terminology the *AA* employed, differs fundamentally from both of these formulations. The Yogācāras identified the very essence of buddhahood (*svabhāva*) with an undifferentiated, ultimate realization, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, also known simply as "the *kāya* of the Buddhas." That *kāya*, in its essence (*svābhāvika*) is the *svābhāvikakāya*, but in manifestation to non-Buddhas has the appearance of *sāmbhogikakāya* or *nairmāṇikakāya*.

In other words, contrary to Abhidharma and Haribhadra, the Yogācāras did not define buddhahood in terms of a collection of many mental qualities, but rather as a single, undifferentiated realization. And the undifferentiated essential oneness of the entity of enlightenment is

reflected throughout the earliest tri-*kāya* literature in the usage and the particular morphology of the three *kāya* names: three *taddhita* forms qualifying the single noun "*kāya*," indicating one, undivided thing existing under three modes. *AA* vs. 1.17 makes syntactic use of the *taddhita* forms of the three *kāya* names analogous to their usage in *MSA* vs. 9.60. In all liklihood, this is because the author of the *AA* wanted the terms to carry the same meaning in his text that they carried in the other texts of his time. This is an important consideration for interpreting *AA* chapter 8, and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Given what has been said, how are we to translate the three *kāya* names? If we follow the etymology presented in *MSA* vss. 9.59-60 and *bhāṣya*, which may in fact be the only clear derivation for the names in extant Buddhist Sanskrit literature, we ought to translate the names something like this: "*svābhāvikakāya*" = "The Body in its Essence;" "*sāmbhogikakāya*" = "The Body in its Shared Enjoyment;"[40] "*nairmāṇikakāya*" = "The Body as Emanation," where "Body" simply refers to the undifferentiated realization of full enlightenment. Such a translation would clearly indicate that we are talking about one thing existing in three modes. However, beginning with *MSA* 9.65-66 and *bhāṣya* and later throughout Yogācāra literature, the three-fold *kāya* is also referred to in the plural as "the three *kāyas*" ("*trayaḥ kāyāḥ*"). This encourages the sort of translation which is now common in modern

40 The reason I use the phrase "shared enjoyment" in translating the terms "*sambhoga*" or "*sāmbhogika*"rather than just "enjoyment" (the usual translation) will be explained in the next chapter.

scholarship in which it may appear that three separate things called "Bodies" are being designated: "Essence Body," "Enjoyment Body," and "Emanation Body." In certain textual contexts the former mode of translation is preferable, but in other contexts the latter (and presently very common) mode of translating is more appropriate. Therefore, in this work, we alternate between the different translations depending on the textual materials to which we are referring.

However, the reader should understand that retained both in the morphology of the Sanskrit names (*taddhita* forms) and in the sense of the terms throughout Yogācāra literature is the important idea that buddhahood is fundamentally one, formless, indivisible thing, a non-dual realization of emptiness or suchness, i.e. the *dharmakāya* as explained in section 2 of this chapter.[41] The expression "three *kāyas*" (plural) became a loose way of referring to the three modes under which only one thing, buddhahood, exists and manifests.

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[41] See *MSA* 9.60-62, *bhāṣya* and *vṛttibhāṣya*; *Msg* 7.11, 10.1, 10.3 *bhāṣya* and *upanibandhana*; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* (Nishio edition), pp. 125-6; *RGVV* ch. 2 preamble and vss. 2.38-2.61; *Kāyatrayasūtra*; *Kāyatrayāvatāraśāstra*; the three *kāya* chapter ("*sku gsum rnam par 'byed pa*") which appears in later editions of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*.

## 5. Two Meanings of the Term "Dharmakāya" in Yogācāra, with the Term "Svābhāvikakāya" Mediating Between Them

In the previous chapter on the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, we saw how the *dharmakāya* was identified primarily as suchness (*tathatā*), i.e. emptiness (*śūnyatā*), and the non-dual realization of it (*prajñāpāramitā*). In sections 2 and 3 of this chapter we saw how buddhahood in Yogācāra texts was identified in its essence not as a set of conceptually differentiated *buddha dharmas* but as purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) and "the supreme perception" of it, non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). Together these two, purified suchness and non-conceptual gnosis (*tathatāviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna*) were understood to comprise the *dharmakāya*. In fact, Sthiramati explicitly equated this Yogācāra conception of *dharmakāya* with that of the *PP sūtras* by inserting into his comments the famous quote from the *Vajracchedikā PP sūtra*:

> Whoever sees me as [my] form,
> Whoever knows me as [my] voice, ...
> Those beings do not see me.
> As suchness are Buddhas seen,
> The guides are the *dharmakāyas*, ....

We noted in section 3 of this chapter the close relation between this notion of the *dharmakāya* (as *tathatā* and its realization) and the first of the six Yogācāra categories analytical of buddhahood: "*svabhāva*" ("essence"), the essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood being the formless *dharmakāya* which is invisible to gods and men.

*MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya* (quoted in section 4 above) weaves these themes into its etymological definition for the first of the three *kāyas*. It says: "The *kāya* of the Buddhas ... in its essence (*svābhāvika*) is the *dharmakāya*, whose characteristic is fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*)." Fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) will be discussed in the following section. The term "*svābhāvikakāya*" is explained here very early in the development of the tri-*kāya* literature (ca. 4th century C.E). According to this, probably the earliest etymological explanation of the term available to us, the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" derives its very name from the fact that it is the *dharmakāya* understood as the very essence ("*svābhāvika*") of buddhahood ("the *kāya*"). The term "*svābhāvikakāya*" is given meaning by reference to the formless *dharmakāya* found in Mahāyāna sūtras. The new Yogācāra term "*svābhāvikakāya*" refers to the same *dharmakāya* long familiar to Mahāyāna Buddhism, but with a new designation which emphasizes its being the very essence of enlightenment.

As in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, the *dharmakāya* of Yogācāra is enlightenment as realized by the one who is enlightened. The new Yogācāra designation, "*svābhāvikakāya*," distinguishes the *dharmakāya* (enlightenment as realized by a Buddha) from the other two *kāyas* which are merely appearances of the *dharmakāya* to non-Buddhas. Because the *svābhāvikakāya* is simply the *dharmakāya* as it is realized by a Buddha, it became typical in Yogācāra literature to refer to the first of the three *kāyas* either as "*svābhāvikakāya*" or as "*dharmakāya*". In earlier texts the common name for the first *kāya* was "*svābhāvikakāya*"; but this term was

gradually supplanted by the term "*dharmakāya*" in later commentaries, making it the norm to call the three *kāyas* "*dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*."[42]

At the same time, as noted in the previous section, the fundamental formulation of three *kāya* theory (presented in the *MSA* and its commentaries) actually asserted only one undivided ontological principle of enlightenment: the perfected, non-dual realization of suchness (distinguishing that into three operational modes known as "the three-fold *kāya*"). That one principle was understood to be the one ontological basis of all enlightened qualities and *kāyas*. It was sometimes referred to in Yogācāra literature as "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*," "*anāsravadhātu*," "*kāya buddhānām*," "*tathāgatakāya*," etc. It was also frequently referred to as "*dharmakāya*." Thus, it was typical in Yogācāra texts to use the term "*dharmakāya*" in an inclusive sense, referring not just to the first of the

42 *MSA* chapter 9 may well be the first presentation of three *kāyas* in Yogācāra literature. It labels the first of the three *kāyas*:"*svābhāvikakāya*" (not "*dharmakāya*"). The next earliest texts to teach three *kāyas* are probably *Msg* chapter 10 (based on *MSA* 9), *AA* chapter 8, *Ratnagotravibhāga* chapter 2 (see Davidson, pp. 132-144 for recent speculations on the chronology of the "Maitreya" corpus), and the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra* (the four verses near the end of the sūtra on *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*. The relative dating of the MSA and *Buddhabhūmi sūtra* is presently somewhat controversial, but that does not affect the argument here). Like *MSA* 9, all of these texts call the first *kāya* "*svābhāvikakāya*." Of all the early Yogācāra śāstras to teach three *kāyas*, only the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* refers to the first as "*dharmakāya*." But this text mentions the three *kāyas* only in passing, and obviously drew the theory from other sources. It is in the commentaries and subcommentaries to these texts, ascribed to Vasubandhu, Asvabhāva, Sthiramati, etc., that the term "*dharmakāya*" begins regularly replacing the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" in the list of three *kāyas*. And this becomes the norm in later texts such as the *Kāyatrayāvatāraśāstra*, *Kāyatrayasūtra*, *Kāyatrayastotra*, *Madhyamakāvatāra*.

three *kāyas*, but to the entire state of buddhahood as a whole, including all enlightened qualities and all three *kāyas*.[43]

In sum, the term "*dharmakāya*" had two basic meanings in Yogācāra literature: 1. an exclusive sense as the first of three *buddha kāyas*, and 2. an inclusive sense as the state of buddhahood in its entirety (including all three *kāyas*). This did not involve a contradiction. The three *kāyas* were never conceived of as three separate entities. They were understood ontologically to be one thing (simply enlightenment) as it came under the purview of three kinds of beings: Buddhas (who alone realize the *dharmakāya* as it really is, "*svābhāvika*," "in its own nature"), *ārya bodhisattvas* (who share the enjoyment of the dharma with the *sāmbhogikakāya*), and other beings (who have the merit only to perceive the *nairmāṇikakāya*). All three *kāyas*, then, were understood to be one entity, one "stuff," the formless *dharmakāya* (the non-dual gnosis of emptiness), understood both as the first of the three *kāyas*, and the one "stuff" which composed all three.

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43 *Msg* 9.1 identifies a Buddha's enlightenment with *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa* (the enlightenment of a Buddha which is neither bound to cyclic existence nor immersed in quiescence alone), a seminal Mahāyāna concept of full enlightenment which will be discussed in chapter 5 below. *Apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa* is described there as the *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (fundamental transformation) of the bodhisattvas, in terms which refer to the entire resultant state of enlightenment (*āśrayaparāvṛtti* as a Mahāyāna model for full enlightenment will be discussed in detail in the following section). *Msg* 10.3 equates *dharmakāya* also with the entire state of enlightenment, by describing it in the same terms: as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, meaning buddhahood as a whole. *MSA* 9. 60 *bhāṣya* makes the same characterization. At 9.77 the *bhāṣya* closely relates *dharmakāya* with the *anāsravadhātu*, a *MSA* model of full enlightenment. Sthiramati's *vṛttibhāṣya* on MSA 9.60 and 66 identifies *dharmakāya* directly with *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, another Yogācāra model of full enlightenment. The final verse of Vasubandhu's *Triṃśika* equates *dharmakāya* with buddhahood as a whole: identifying it with *āśrayaparāvṛtti* and *anāsravadhātu* (Levi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, p. 43).

When it was first introduced (in texts such as the *MSA*), the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" was used to differentiate these two meanings. The *dharmakāya* in its own nature, "*svābhāvika*," was designated "*svābhāvikakāya*." While the *dharmakāya* as the realization which formed the basis of all enlightened qualities and *kāyas* was just designated "*dharmakāya*." But as later commentaries began to drop the differentiating term "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*dharmakāya*" was given double semantic duty. Thus, the term "*dharmakāya*" came to be used in Yogācāra literature either with an exclusive sense (meaning the *svābhāvikakāya* alone out of the three *kāyas*), or with an inclusive sense (meaning all of buddhahood inclusive of all three *kāyas*).

We saw in chaper 2 above that the *Abhidharmakośa*, in verse 7.34, used the term "*dharmakāya*" in a special inclusive sense to designate the state of buddhahood in its entirety as "*phalasampad*," "the perfection of the result." The Yogācāra usage of the term "*dharmakāya*" in its inclusive sense may bear some historical relation to this. In any case, as we shall see in later chapters, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* refers to the entire subject matter of its 8th chapter as "*dharmakāyaphalam*," "resultant *dharmakāya*," meaning the entire state of buddhahood as the result of the Mahāyāna path. And this inclusive usage of the term is most likely related to Yogācāra usage.

## 6. The Theory of Svābhāvikakāya as a Natural Extrapolation from Yogācāra Gnoseology and Praxis

*Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* 9.60 *bhāṣya* is a seminal source of three *kāya* theory. It was quoted earlier (section 4. above), but we turn to it again for further information on the *svābhāvikakāya*:

> The body of the Buddhas is threefold, [being]: 1. In essence (*svābhāvika*), the *dharmakāya*, whose characteristic is fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). 2. in shared enjoyment (*sāṃbhogika*), that through which it brings enjoyment of dharma to the circles of assembly. 3. as emanation (*nairmāṇika*), the emanation through which it works for the benefit of beings.
>
> *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*

This text, in most succinct form, gives one defining characteristic for the *svābhāvikakāya*: "*āśrayaparāvṛtti*", translated "fundamental transformation," or the "transformation of the basis," ("*āśraya*" = basis, fundament; "*parāvṛtti*" or its alternate form "*parivṛtti*" = transformation).[44]

Like *MSA* chapter 9, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha's* (*Msg*) two final chapters concern full enlightenment, the result of the Mahāyāna path of practise. At the beginning of these chapters, full enlightenment as *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa* (non-abiding *nirvāṇa*), and

[44] On the etymologies and general semantic equivalence of "*āśraya-parāvṛtti*" and "*āśraya-parivṛtti*" in the classical Yogācāra texts, see Davidson, pp. 152-3.

*svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is defined first in terms of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*.[45] The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* in its treatment of *svābhāvikakāya* appears to follow the *MSA bhāṣya,* equating *svābhāvikakāya* with *dharmakāya* and giving *āśrayaparivṛtti* as its defining characteristic.[46]

The concept of "*āśrayaparāvṛtti*" (or "*āśrayaparivṛtti*") in Yogācāra texts is a model of full enlightenment in which the basis of ordinary existence is transformed into the full enlightenment of a Buddha through the process of yogic realization. This model puts its focus on enlightenment as the result of a transformative yogic process, the process through which the yogi's total being in its impure state is transmuted into the pure state of buddhahood. The impure state is the "basis", "*āśraya*". This is the psycho-physical organism, the mental and physical composite which comprises a sentient being prior to enlightenment. Yogācāra literature contains many different models for the *āśraya*, some inherited from early Buddhism (the *skandhas*, *dhātus*, *āyatanas*), and some which are Mahāyāna or specifically Yogācāra concepts (*samalātathatā*, *alayavijñāna*, *saṃkleśabhāga paratantrasvabhāva*). Through the practice of the Mahāyāna path, the basis is utterly transformed (*parāvṛtti/parivṛtti*) into one of the Mahāyāna models of enlightenment:

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[45] *Msg* 9.1 (where the fundamental characteristic of *apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa* is *āśrayaparāvṛtti*), 10.1 (where as in *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*, *svābhāvikakāya* is identified as the formless *dharmakāya*), 10.3.1 (where the first and primary characteristic of the *dharmakāya/svābhāvikakāya* is *āśrayaparāvṛtti*). Lamotte, pp. 81, 84. *Apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*, non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, is arguably the central concept of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It will be discussed in the next chapter.

[46] The *Buddhabhūmivyākhāyana* mirrors the explanation of the *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*, i.e. *svābhāvikakāya* is identified with *dharmakāya* whose characteristic is *āśrayaparivṛtti*; Nishio, p.125.

*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, *anāsravadhātu*, *tathatāviśuddhi*, *nirvikalpajñāna*, *dharmakāya*, *parinispanna*, etc. At the stage of the literature at which the three *kāyas* appear, all such models are considered equivalent to each other (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi* = *anāsravadhātu* = *tathatāviśuddhi* = *dharmakāya*, etc.).[47]

Because *āśrayaparāvṛtti/parivṛtti* is an essential defining feature of the *svābhāvikakāya*, we will examine its place in the *MSA*, *Msg*, and commentaries (which are our earliest detailed sources for the three *kāya* theory) and other early Yogācāra texts which treat it as a principle topic.

*MSA* 9.12 and *bhāṣya* explain buddhahood as *āśrayaparivṛtti*, the complete transformation of the basis, attained when all passion obstructions and obstructions to knowledge (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇa*) are eliminated.[48] Sthiramati's commentary says that "*āśraya*" refers to the five defiled aggregates (the "*skandhas*," the psycho-physical constituents of living beings: form, consciousness, feeling, recognition, and mental formations). They are the basis. The passion and knowledge obstructions within those aggregates are removed by the practise of the Mahāyāna

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47 I refer the reader to Ronald Davidson's excellent PhD thesis for an in depth explanation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti/parivṛtti* in Yogācāra literature. He traces the theory through the pre-Yogācāra, early and later Yogācāra texts and separates out the different models for the basis and result of transformation (Davidson, pp. 160-259). Different models arose out of different intellectual milieus, textual traditions, etc. which fed into what eventually became known as the "Yogācāra," "Cittamātra," or "Vijñaptimātra" tradition. He also points out stages in the literature where different models were consciously equated with each other through the use of *paryāya*, the notion of cognitive synonomy (pp. 116-125).

One important point here is that the Yogācāra understood its models of full enlightenment, including the three *kāya* model, in terms of *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, i.e. as the completion of a process of yogic realization, not simply as objects of logical analysis.

48 *MSA* 9.12 and *bhāṣya*. Levi, p. 35-36.

yogic path, through the completion of which the aggregates are replaced with the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* (purity of the dharma realm) and *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis) of buddhahood. That constitutes the "*parāvṛtti*," the completed transformation of the impure basis into perfect purity.[49] Buddhahood then, as fundamental transformation, is characterized by two key terms: "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*" and "*nirvikalpajñāna*."

The term "*dharmadhātu*" in Yogācāra literature refers to ultimate reality as understood in that tradition. As such, it is equated with the terms "*tathatā*" ("suchness," the unchanging reality of things which is "ever such"), "*paramārtha*" ("the ultimate", being the object of "ultimate gnosis"), "*dharmatā*" ("thinghood," the ultimate reality of things) and "*śūnyatā*" (emptiness, the nonexistence of inherent duality).[50] The term "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*" (purity of the dharma realm) is thus equivalent to the terms "*tathatāviśuddhi*" (purity of suchness) and "*viśuddhātathatā*" (purified suchness), terms which Yogācāra texts use as a definition of buddhahood (see this chapter, sections 2 and 3 above). The term "*nirvikalpajñāna*" also often appears together with the term

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49 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge mi, fol. 113b1-2: *da ni gnas yongs su gyur pa'i don bstan pa'i phyir tsigs su bcad pa drug rtsom mo zhe bya ba'i don to/ de la gnas zhes bya ba ni gzugs kyi phung po nas rnam par shes pa'i bar du phung po lnga la bya ste/ phung po de dag la yod pa'i nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa spangs nas chos kyi dbyings rnam par dag par gyur pa dang/ rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes su gyur pa la gnas gzhan du gyur pa zhes bya'o/* Note how Sthiramati uses the terms "*āśrayaparivṛtti*" ("*gnas yongs su gyur ba*") and "*āśrayaparāvṛtti*" ("*gnas gzhan du gyur ba*") interchangably as synonyms.

50 *MAV* 1.14, Nagao, p. 23: *tathatā bhūta-koṭiś cānimittaṃ paramārthatā/ dharmma-dhātuś ca paryāyāḥ śūnyatāyāḥ samāsataḥ//* The etymologies of each of these synonyms for *śūnyatā* is given in *MAV* 1.15 and *bhāṣya,* Nagao, p.23-24.

"*tathatāviśuddhi*" or its equivalents, the two terms serving as a pair to characterize the entire essence of the state of buddhahood.

"*Nirvikalpajñāna*" and "*tathatāviśuddhi*" or their equivalents often appear as a pair in Yogācāra literature[51] because, taken together, they designate an important Yogācāra model of enlightenment in which what is unreal disappears from view as what is real appears clearly. Enlightenment is at once a non-perception of what is unreal, and a perception of what is real (recall section 2 above, Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.78: "Utter non-perception is the highest perception."). Within the compound "*tathatāviśuddhi*," "*tathatā*" refers to suchness, ultimate reality as it is. "*Viśuddhi*" means that the suchness of things is purified of all the cognitive obstructions which prevent its being known.[52] Within the term "*nirvikalpajñāna*," "*nirvikalpa*" means nonconceptual, free from dualistic conceptualizing. "*Jñāna*" means profound knowledge, gnosis.[53] Thus, *tathatāviśuddhi* is ultimate reality, free of all obstructions which prevent its being known, while *nirvikalpajñāna* is knowledge, free of all conceptualization which prevents knowing reality. The two terms are

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51 See, for example, *MSA* 6.9 and *bhāṣya*; *MSA* 11.31 *bhāṣya*; *Msg* 8.18 with commentaries, Lamotte, p. 247; *Msg* 9.1 and 10.3 with commentaries, Lamotte, pp. 259-61, 268; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, pp. 21-22, 117-118, 58-59, 122-123. *MAV* 1.16 *ṭīkā*, Yamaguchi, p. 51; *DDV* IX, quoted in Davidson, p. 289-292; *Kāyatrayavṛtti* fols. 122-4 to 5.

52 *MSA* 6.9 and *bhāṣya*, *MSA* 19.53-54 and *bhāṣya*, *MAV* 5.20 and commentaries, *DDV vṛtti* sDe-dge bi, fol. 32b2-3. See also Ruegg, *La Theorie*, pp. 421 ff. for an excellent summary of the *RGV's* closely related theory of *samalā* and *nirmalā tathatā*.

53 *MSA* 6.9, *bhāṣya*, and *vṛttibhāṣya* sDe-dge mi, fol. 80b2 where *nirvikalpajñāna* is defined as knowledge free of the conceptualization of subject and object. *MSA* 14.28 and *bhāṣya*, *MSA* 19.51-54 and *bhāṣya*. *Msg* 8.18 and *bhāṣya*. *Msg* chapter 8 with commentaries and the *DDV* with *vṛtti* give perhaps the fullest treatment of *nirvikalpajñāna* in early Yogācāra literature. The *DDV*'s account of entry into *nirvikalpajñāna* will be discussed in detail below.

mutually implicative. Together they point to a non-dual realization of ultimate reality in which epistemological subject and object (*grāhaka* and *grāhya*) are no longer conceptually constructed, hence no longer distinguished. *Tathatāviśuddhi* means reality is unobstructed from view, while *nirvikalpajñāna* means that the viewer is no longer obstructed from reality. From within the perspective of the yogic realization, highest knowledge and the reality it knows are no longer "subject" and "object." They are experientially undivided. It is the state of utter identification between nonconceptual gnosis and universal suchness which comprises the very essence of buddhahood, the *svābhāvikakāya*.

At the state of enlightenment, there is no *tathatāviśuddhi* apart from *nirvikalpajñāna*, and no *nirvikalpajñāna* apart from *tathatāviśuddhi*. Because both terms refer to one non-dual realization and mutually imply each other, often just one of the two terms suffices as the defining principle for buddhahood as a whole. This was noted in sections 2 and 3 above where *tathatāviśuddhi* was taken as the defining principle of full enlightenment, comprising its *svabhāva* (essence). The equivalent concepts, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* and *anāsravadhātu* are used similarly throughout *MSA* chapter 9 to refer to buddhahood as a whole.[54] The final chapter of the *Msg* is entitled "*phalajñāna*," "gnosis, the result," referring to the entire state of buddhahood as gnosis (*jñāna*). And the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*DDV*) with *vṛtti* describes the entire process of

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[54] See also *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 66 where *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* is defined simply as *dharmakāya*.

gradual attainment of enlightenment as "entry into *nirvikalpajñāna*" ("*nirvikalpajñāna praveśa*").

The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*DDV*) is an important source of information on the early Yogācāra theory of *āśrayaparāvṛtti/parivṛtti*. Its yogic and philosophical models are closely related to those found in the *MSA*, *MAV*, *AA* and *RGV*, all of which are ascribed by the Tibetan tradition to Maitreya, in part, undoubtedly, because of the apparent close relationship between these texts. Even though the primary focus of each of the five texts differs in important ways from the others, they significantly overlap. The *DDV* and *MAV* are seminal articulations of fundamental Yogācāra yogic and philosophical theory. The *MSA* is a giant compendium of the entire spectrum of Mahāyāna (primarily Yogācāra) practice and theory. The *AA* is an enigmatic interpretation of the *PP sūtras* in terms of Mahāyāna paths and stages. And the *RGV* is the fundamental Indian commentary on the theory of *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha nature). In a number of places these texts draw on a common substratum of ideas, primarily Yogācāran (e.g. *āśrayaparāvṛtti/parivṛtti*, the *pancamārga* model of the yogic path, the four *samādhis* of the *prayoga mārga* leading to *nirvikalpajñāna*, *cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*, *trikāya* terminology, etc.). Although many images and concepts are shared among these treatises, they sometimes differ in their formulation and use of them.

More than half of the *DDV* is devoted to the explanation of *āśrayaparivṛtti*, fundamental transformation.[55] It and its *vṛtti* (ascribed to Vasubandhu) explain fundamental transformation as the essential process of yogic realization leading to full enlightenment, describing the stages of its development through the Mahāyāna paths (*mārga*). In what follows, quotations will be translated from relevant portions of the *DDV* and *vṛtti* to build a wider Yogācāra context for this important model of enlightenment. We will then translate related quotes from other Yogācāra texts. The *DDV* says:

> Entry into *dharmatā* by six modes is supreme: entry 1. into its characteristic (*lakṣana*), 2. into its basis (*sthiti*) 3. into analytical penetration of it (*nirvedha*), 4. into contact with it (*sparśa*), 5. into recollection of it (*anusmṛti*), and 6. into the arrival at its very nature (*tadātmakopagata*). 1. Its characteristic is as in *sūtra*. 2. Its basis is all phenomena and all collections of scriptures. 3. Analytical penetration of it is all paths of application (*prayoga mārga*) comprising correct attention (*yoniśamanasikāra*) in reliance upon the Mahāyāna scriptures. 4. Contact occurs through attaining the accurate view. [Contact] is the obtainment and direct experience of suchness (*tathatā*) by the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*). 5. Recollection is the path of meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*) on the object seen by knowledge. Comprising the factors which foster enlightenment (*bodhipakṣa*), it serves to clear away the impurity. 6. Finally, there is the arrival at the very nature [of *dharmatā*]. When suchness (*tathatā*) has become free of impurity, all appears only as suchness. Precisely that is the establishment of fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*).[56]

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55 Note that the *DDV vṛtti* specifically equates the terms "*parivṛtti*" and "*parāvṛtti*" within the compound *āśrayaparivṛtti/parāvṛtti*, both meaning "transformation." sDe-dge bi, fol. 38a3.

56 *DDV* sDe-dge phi, fols. 51a6 - 51b2: "*rnam pa drug gis chos nyid la/ 'jug pa bla na med pa ste/ mtshan nyid kun tu gnas pa dang/ nges par 'byed dang reg pa dang/ rjes su dran dang de'i bdag nyid/ nye bar son la 'jug pas so/ mtshan nyid mdo ni ji lta bzhin/*

Note how the *DDV* organizes the Mahāyāna paths of yogic practise (*prayoga mārga*, *darśana mārga*, *bhāvanā mārga*, and *aśaikṣa mārga*) around the central notion of purification of suchness. Suchness (*tathatā*), the ultimate reality which does not appear to sentient beings whose minds are covered with impurity, is gradually uncovered through stages of yogic penetration, until, at final enlightenment it shines forth without any further obstruction. This is *āśrayaparivṛtti*, developed in stages until fully established at buddhahood. We will look at the *DDVvṛtti* on "the modes of entry into *dharmatā*" numbered 5. (*bhāvanā mārga*) and 6. (*tadātmakopagata = aśaikṣa mārga*) above. The terms "*tathatā*" (suchness) and "*dharmatā*" ("thinghood," the ultimate reality of things) are used as synonyms:

> The [*DDV*] teaches:"Recollection consists of the path of meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*) comprising all the factors which foster enlightenment, which focuses on what was seen [by the *darśana mārga*] for the purpose of totally eliminating the impurities." "Recollection" refers to the path of meditation which immediately follows the path of seeing. Recollection confirming the path just attained brings one near [to the very nature of *dharmatā*]. What is its purpose? It is for the purpose of utterly eliminating the *[tathatā's]* impurities; for the purpose of removing remaining impurities, the characteristics to be eliminated, by meditating on *tathatā*.

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*gnas ni chos rnams thams cad dang! gsung rab mdo sde thams cad do/ de la nge par 'byed pa ni/ theg pa chen po'i mdo sde la/ brten pa'i tshul bzhin yid byed pas/ bsdus pa'i sbyor lam thams cad do/ reg pa yang dag lta thob phyir/ mthong ba'i lam gyis mngon sum gyi/ tshul du de bzhin nyid thob cing/ nyams su myong ba gang yin pa'o/ rjes su dran pa rig pas ni/ mthong ba'i don la bsgom lam gyi/ byang chub phogs kyis bsdus pa ste/ de ni dri ma sel ba'i phyir/ de la de yi bdag nyid du/ nye bar son pa de bzhin nyid/ dri ma med par gyur pa na/ tham cad de bzhin nyid tsam du/ snang ba de yang gnas gyur pa/ grub pa yin no.../"*

> Immediately following recollection is the arrival at the very nature of [*dharmatā*] (*tadātmakopagata*). Therefore the [root text] teaches: "Arrival at the very nature of [*dharmatā*]: when *tathatā* has become free of impurity, all appears only as *tathatā*." When the remaining impurity has been eliminated by the path of meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*) so that *tathatā* is free of impurity, through the final path (i.e. the *aśaikṣa mārga*, buddhahood) everything appears as only *tathatā*. This is because, through the elimination of all impurities, [all] has become merely *tathatā*. That alone has become the cognitive object. That is called "arrival at the very nature of [*dharmatā* ]". It is the complete establishment of fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), being the very nature of [*dharmatā*]. On the [earlier] stages, the path of seeing, etc. there was also transformation (*parivṛtti*). But this [final transformation] is said to be completely established, because all impurities have been eliminated.[57]

The *DDV* root text continues with a more detailed discussion of the modes of entering into the realization of fundamental transformation:

> Entry into fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) by ten modes is supreme: 1. essence (*svabhāva*), 2. objects (*vastu*), 3. persons (*pudgala*), 4. distinctiveness (*viśeṣa*), 5. purpose (*prayojana*), 6. basis (*āśraya*), 7. attention (*manasikāra*), 8. application (*prayoga*), 9. faults (*ādīnava*), 10. benefits (*anuśaṃsa*).
>
> 1. Entry into the essence (*svabhāva*) is suchness' (*tathatā's*) freedom from impurity, such that the adventitious impurity does not appear, and suchness does appear.[58]

The *vṛtti*, commenting on this, says:

> So that the adventitious impurity no longer appears and suchness (*tathatā*) alone appears, suchness (*tathatā*) has become

57 *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, fol. 32a3-7.
58 *DDV*, sDe-dge phi, fol. 51b2-4.

free of impurity. As such it is the essence of fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*). Such thorough knowledge (*parijñāna*) is called "supreme entry into the essence" [of fundamental transformation].[59]

It is important to note in this passage how the text specifically equates purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) with thorough knowledge (*parijñāna*) which is nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). "Purifying suchness" means removing what covers ultimate reality so that it is permitted to appear. "Suchness appearing" implies an awareness to which it appears. And that awareness is the profoundest kind of knowledge, "thorough knowledge" (*parijñāna*).

*MSA* verses 19.53-54 express the same theme. The essential yogic practise leading to enlightenment (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) is the development of the gnosis (*jñāna*) which uncovers suchness, permitting it to appear, while ordinary beings see only the impurity which covers it:

For fools, reality (*tattvaṃ*) is covered and it is unreality (*atatvaṃ*) which completely appears.
But for bodhisattvas, having removed that [covering], reality completely appears. *MSA* 19.53

The non-appearance of the non-existent and the appearance of the existent are to be realized (*jñeya*).
This is liberation, fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), because one proceeds freely. *MSA* 19.54

*MSA* 19.54 *bhāṣya*: The non-appearance of the [dualistic] sign (*nimitta*), the non-existent object, and the appearance of suchness (*tathatā*), the existent object, are to be known as fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). For through it the one does not

[59] *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, fol. 32b2-3.

appear and the other appears. And precisely that is to be known as liberation. ...."[60]

Suchness free from all the impurity which has covered it (*vimalā tathatā*) is the essence of full enlightenment. Gradual purification of suchness occurs through the development of more and more powerful forms of gnosis realizing suchness, referred to as "nonconceptual gnosis" (*nirvikalpajñāna*) or "thorough knowledge" (*parijñāna*). The final, complete purification of suchness is brought about and realized by that gnosis. Thus, gnosis of suchness and purification of suchness are inseparable. The essence of enlightenment being purified suchness, nonconceptual gnosis is the entrance into that essence and inseparable from it. Where cognitive subject and object are no longer separated through conceptual construction, knowledge (*jñāna*) and its object (*tathatā*) are not distinguished from each other. It is for this reason that buddhahood's essence (*svabhāva*) is designated in Yogācāra literature through a special abstract terminology designed precisely to point to a non-dual realization which does not fit into our usual epistemological categories of subject and object, while at the same time including what we ordinarily call "subject" and "object" within that realization. Hence, buddhahood is defined as *āśrayaparāvṛtti* (fundamental transformation), which is equated with: *tathatāviśuddhi-nirvikalpajñāna* (purified suchness-nonconceptual gnosis), *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* (the purity of the *dharma* realm), *anāsravadhātu* (the undefiled realm), *dharmakāya*

[60] Levi, p.170.

(embodiment of *dharma* or embodiment of *dharmatā*) and *svābhāvikakāya* (the essence body, the body of the Buddhas in its essence).

These themes are further developed in the *DDV vṛtti's* explanation of "the basis" (*āśraya*) of fundamental transformation, the sixth of the ten modes of "entry into fundamental transformation" presented in the *DDV* passage quoted above:

> The basis (*āśraya*) of fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) is nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*), because [fundamental transformation] is attained on that basis. How does one enter into [that basis]? [The root text] says: "through six aspects of entry into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna praveśa*)." The six aspects of entry are: 1. the support (*ālambana*), 2. elimination of signs (*nimittaparivarjana*), 3. correct practice (*saṃyakprayoga*), 4. characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*), 5. benefits (*anuśaṃsa*), and 6. thorough knowledge (*parijñāna*).[61]

This is not the place to enter into a complete study of this passage. We will focus on a point of particular relevance to the present discussion, "correct practice," (*saṃyakprayoga*, number 3. above) the third aspect of entry into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna praveśa*). The *DDV* says:

> Entry into correct practice is four-fold through practice of 1.perception (*upalambha*), 2. non-perception (*anupalambha*), 3. non-perception of perception (*upalambhānupalambha*), and 4. perception of non-perception (*nopalambhopalambha*).[62]

61 *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, fol. 33a7-b1.
62 *DDV*, sDe-dge phi, fol. 52a3-4.

The *DDV vṛtti* comments:

> 1. practice of perception is practice of the perception of cognition- only (*vijnaptimātra*). 2. practise of non-perception is non-perception of an object. 3. practice of the non-perception of perception is as follows: there being no object, cognition-only is not perceived, because if there is no object to be cognized, there can not be any cognizing [of it]. 4. practice of the perception of non-perception is as follows: by not perceiving both [cognizer and cognized], the lack of both, non-duality, is perceived.[63]

The *DDV* expands on this in its later discussion of entry into attention (*manasikāra*):

> Entry into attention (*manasikāra*): The bodhisattva who wishes to enter into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) mentally attends as follows: Because of not knowing suchness (*tathatā*), there has been the abode of all seeds (*sarvabījaka*) of false conceptualization (*abhūtaparikalpita*), the cause of the appearance of non-existent duality, and the other causes [of that appearance, the sense consciousnesses] which are based on it. Thus, although the cause with its result [non-existent duality] has appeared, it does not exist. By its appearing, *dharmatā* does not appear. And by its not appearing, *dharmatā* appears. The bodhisattva who attends correctly in this way is at entry into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*).
>
> From perceiving thusly, he enters into the perception of cognition-only (*vijñaptimātropalambha*). From the perception of cognition-only, he enters into the non-perception of objects (*arthānupalambha*). From the non-perception of objects, he enters into the non-perception of cognition-only (*vijñaptimātrānupalambha*). From the non-perception of that, he enters into the perception which lacks dual distinctions. That is non-perception of dual distinctions. And that is non-conceptual gnosis, because it lacks an object (*viṣaya*), a cognitive support

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63 *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, fol. 34a1-2.

(*ālambana*), being characterized by the non-perception of all cognitive objects (*nimitta*).[64]

These passages describe four basic stages of yogic realization fundamental to early Yogācāra Buddhism. The *vṛtti* comments:

> [The *DDV*] says: "Although the cause with its result [non-existent duality] has appeared, it does not exist." This means that although what is falsely conceptualized [i.e. duality] has always appeared in awareness, it simply does not exist. "By its appearing, *dharmatā* does not appear." This means suchness (*tathatā*) does not appear. "By its not appearing, *dharmatā* appears." This is because it [*dharmatā*] consists of the non-existence of that [duality]. "A bodhisattva by zealously attending in this way is at entry into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*)." This means that [what is being described] is within the path of application (*prayoga mārga*).[65]

This explains the entrance into the first of the four stages which comprise the Yogācāra path of application (*prayoga mārga*) as it culminates in the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*). The path of application, as mentioned above, leads to direct "contact" with suchness on the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*) by generating the nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) which directly realizes suchness (*tathatā*). The yogic process involves eliminating the false conceptualization of duality which hides reality. The false conceptualization (*abhutaparikalpita*) hiding reality needs to be purified away. When what hides reality no longer appears, reality (*tathatā/dharmatā*) itself appears to gnosis.

64 *DDV*, sDe-dge phi, foi. 52b5-53a1.
65 *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, 36a7-b2.

Therefore, to say that false conceptualization (*abhutaparikalpita*), which hides reality (*tathatā*), is purified away (*viśuddhā*) is just to say that one gradually enters into a gnosis which is free of such conceptualization (*nirvikalpa jñāna*). The *vṛtti* describes the four yogic stages involved:

> [The *DDV*] says: "Through that perception...." This means that although what is falsely conceptualized (*abhūtaparikalpita*) is seen to appear, one perceives that it does not exist. Such perceptions "enter into the perception of cognition-only (*vijñaptimātra*)" because it is [just] cognition which is appearing dualistically. "From the perception of cognition-only, he enters into the non-perception of all objects." This means that because it is cognition itself which appears as object, there is no external object. "From the non-perception of all objects, he enters into the non-perception of cognition-only." This means that the cognizing itself can not be established as a "cognizing," because if an object to be cognized does not exist then there can not be a cognizing [of it]. "From the non-perception of that, ...." This means from the non-perception of subject [cognizing] and object [cognized]. "... he enters into the perception which lacks dual distinctions." By the very lack of duality itself, there are no dual distinctions. "Dual" refers to perception in the dual nature of subject and object. This is to be known as a perception which lacks distinctions, because the distinction is that of duality, which, were it to exist, would be known. "That is non-perception of duality," being perception of the lack of subject and object. "And that is non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*)." This shows the subject matter [of the passage]. As it said [at the beginning of the passage], the bodhisattva who wishes to enter into nonconceptual gnosis mentally attends in this way. And one who attends in this way enters into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*).[66]

These passages delineate perhaps the most important gnoseological model of early Yogācāra literature. The four stages of entry into gnosis

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[66] *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, 36b2-37a1.

are as follows: First the bodhisattva attends to the way in which phenomena ordinarily appear. She notes the appearance of duality, that is the appearance in awareness of a subject and object of cognition which exist independently as separate entities, apart from any conceptual construction of "subject" and "object." In fact "subject" and "object" as they appear in awareness are conceptual constructions, mental designations; but false conceptualization (*abhūtaparikalpana*) constructs and then adheres to them as if they existed independent of any such process of designation. The independent subject and object conceived by false conceptualization is a duality, which, while not existing, appears to exist. When phenomena (*dharmas*) appear under this aspect of non-existent duality, their reality (*dharmatā, tathatā*), the lack of such duality, can not appear. And by the appearance of non-existent duality ceasing, reality can appear. Comprehending this, the *bodhisattva* enters into the perception of cognition-only (*vijñaptimātra*), the understanding that "subject" and "object" are both aspects of cognition. This is the first stage. From that, she enters into "the non-perception of objects," because she knows that although the epistemological object appears to be external to consciousness, it is not. This is the second stage. But "cognition," consciousness, itself can only be designated and distinguished in relation to what is not consciousness, an object external to it. The external object having been negated, "consciousness" as subject, can no longer be distinguished in relation to it. At this point she enters the third stage, the non-perception even of "cognition-only" (*vijñaptimātra*, = *cittamātra*, mind-only). Both "subject" and "object" having been deconstructed, she

now enters the fourth stage, perception of reality (*dharmatā*) lacking dual distinctions. At this point gnosis passes beyond all conceptual construction, knowing reality directly, with no further distinction between knower and known.

During the course of this process, not only has the mistaken conception of an independent subject and object been negated, but all conceptual constructions including the concepts "subject" and "object" have utterly disappeared in the nonconceptual realization (*nirvikalpajñāna*) of suchness (*tathatā*). The *DDV* says specifically that entry in nonconceptual gnosis requires the total elimination of all signs (*nimitta*), all discursive distinctions, even the distinctions: "gnosis" (*jñāna*) and "suchness" (*tathatā*).[67]

These four stages comprise the path of application (*prayogamārga*) as it culminates in the non-conceptual realization of *tathatā* (*sparśa*, "contact") which is the path of seeing (*darśanamārga*). This non-conceptual realization is repeatedly practiced (*anusmṛti*, "recollected") on the path of meditation (*bhāvanamārga*), purifing more and more of the obstructions covering suchness (*tathatā*). It finally culminates in the total purification of suchness, complete *āśrayaparivṛtti*, buddhahood, where gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) and suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) ever remain epistemologically one.[68]

In preceding sections of this chapter we noted how the essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood in the Yogācāra tradition, in line with the

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67 *DDV*, sDe-dge phi, fol. 52a2-3. *DDV vṛtti*, sDe-dge bi, fol. 33b3-5.
68 See footnotes 56 and 57 above.

*Prajñāpāramitā* tradition, was identified not as a set of varied mental qualities (as had been the case in the Abhidharma tradition), but as a single undifferentiated principle, the enlightened one's perfect gnosis of ultimate reality: *tathatāviśuddhi/nirvikalpajñāna,* and that this comprised the first and most fundamental embodiment (*kāya)* of the Buddha, the *svābhāvikakāya*, the Essence Body. The *DDV* passages discussed above explain the yogic practise which leads naturally to the attainment of the *svābhāvikakāya.* The way the Yogācāras understood *svābhāvikakāya* entirely conformed to their understanding of their core yogic practises and realizations. In other words, the theory of svābhāvikakāya was a natural extrapolation from the Yogācāra theory of praxis and gnoseology.

The Yogācāra tradition gained its very name from its focus on yogic practise. One of the clear purposes of its early literature was to explain the various methods of yogic practise which its adherents actually engaged in, to describe the content of their yogic experience, and to make an inclusive theory into which it fit. The *DDV* is quoted above at some length because it is such an important source for early Yogācāra gnoseology and the theory of *āśrayaparivṛtti/parāvṛtti.* The *DDV* also teaches (briefly) the theory of three *kāyas*. But the basic structure of its yogic theory is found throughout early Yogācāra literature, including those texts (the *MSA*, *Msg* and their commentaries) which first explain in much more detail the theory of three *kāyas* in general, and in particular, the *svābhāvikakāya.*

The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra's* 6th chapter concerns the realization of "thatness," *tattvam*, a Yogācāra equivalent for *tathatā* (suchness) and

*dharmadhātu* (sphere of *dharma*, ultimate sphere), i.e. ultimate reality. *MSA* verses 6.6 through 6.9 explain the *MSA*'s theory of yogic praxis and gnoseology, which parallels that of the *DDV*:

> A bodhisattva, having gathered merit and gnosis collections limitless to complete, has a well considered ascertainment of phenomena (dharmas). Through this, he realizes that the objective domain derives from verbalization.
>
> *MSA* 6.6
>
> Discerning that objects are merely verbalization, he abides in mind alone appearing as them. From that, the sphere of *dharma* (*dharmadhœatu*) comes to manifestation, free of dual character.
>
> *MSA* 6.7
>
> Realizing intellectually that there is nothing other than mind, he then understands the non-existence of mind. Understanding the non-existence of duality, the sage abides in the sphere of *dharma* (*dharmadhātu*) which is free of it.
>
> *MSA* 6.8
>
> The force of the sage's nonconceptual gnosis (*akalpanājñāna*), always and everywhere gone to equality, purges the impenetrable host of faults, his [impure] basis, like a powerful antidote dispels poisen.
>
> *MSA* 6.9 [69]

According to the *bhāṣya* and Sthiramati's commentary, these four verses summarize the five Mahāyāna paths (*mārga*) to enlightenment by describing the gradual entrance into and perfection of "ultimate gnosis" (*pāramārthika jñāna* = *nirvikalpajñāna*) realizing the sphere of *dharma* (*dharmadhātu* = *tathatā*). Again, the *MSA*'s summation of yogic praxis

[69] *MSA* 6.6-6.9, Levi, pp. 23-24.

focuses on the two key concepts we have been discussing: *nirvikalpajñāna* and *tathatā*, as progressively realized until buddhahood.

Sthiramati carefully divides the verses into parts, identifying the correspondence of each part to each of the five Mahāyāna paths (*mārga*). Especially important are the four stages of the path of application (*prayoga mārga*) culminating in the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*), which involve four special samādhis equivalent to the four stages of yogic realization we noted above in the *DDV*. Sthiramati draws the correlations, consistent with the *MSA bhāṣya*, as follows:

Sambhāra Mārga

MSA 6.6, first three feet: "A bodhisattva, having gathered merit and gnosis collections limitless to complete, has a well considered ascertainment of phenomena."

Meditating on suffering, impermanence, selflessness, etc. with a mind empowered by enormous collections of merit and gnosis over the period of a countless eon, he becomes free of doubt regarding the suffering nature, impermanence, etc. of phenomena.

Prayoga Mārga - Uṣman - Ālokalabdha samādhi

*MSA* 6.6, fourth foot: "Through this, he realizes that the objective mode derives from verbalization."

Following this, the bodhisattva comes to understand that what appear as objects in his cognition are distinguished as such through mental "verbalization," i.e. conceptual construction, which distinguishes and names them. He realizes that cognitive objects do not stand outside his cognition, hence, are not separate from his mind. This is the *ālokalabdha samādhi* (concentration of obtained appearance) because he understands that the appearance of cognitive objectivity occurs through mental verbalization. It occurs on the heat stage (*uṣman*) of the path of application (*prayoga mārga*).

Prayoga Mārga - Mūrdhan - Ālokavṛddhi samādhi

*MSA* 6.7, first foot: "Discerning that objects are merely verbalization,..."

On *uṣman*, the practitioner understood the way cognitive objects appeared from his own mind. Now, he sees how cognitive objects appear from his own mind. "Discerning that objects are merely verbalization" means that the way in which cognitive objects arise from mind becomes manifest to him. He sees the mind appearing as objects. This is the *ālokavṛddhi samādhi* (concentration of increased appearance) which occurs on the summit stage (*mūrdhan*) of the path of application (*prayoga mārga*).

Prayoga Mārga - Kṣānti - Tattvaikadeśānupraviṣṭa samādhi

*MSA* 6.7, second foot: "...he abides in mind alone appearing as them."

"As them" means "as objects." Having removed his adherence to the objective mode of cognitive objects (his belief that the objects in cognition stand outside of cognition), he abides in mind alone, knowing that everything which appears is a cognitive appearance not external to mind. This is the *tattvaikadeśānupraviṣṭa samādhi* (concentration which has entered into a portion of reality) which occurs on the patience stage (*kṣānti*) of the path of application (*prayoga mārga*).

According to Sthiramati, the last foot of vs. 6.6 through the second foot of vs. 6.7 concerns the first three stages of the path of application (*prayoga mārga*: *uṣman*, *mūrdhan*, *kṣānti*). The final two feet of vs. 6.7 describe the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*), saying: "From that, the sphere of *dharma* (*dharmadhātu*) comes to manifestation, free of dual character." Sthiramati says this refers to the nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) of the path of seeing which makes manifest the *dharmadhātu*. On the path of seeing, the bodhisattva abides in the *dharmadhātu* free of characteristics of both object and subject, hence "free of dual character." Sthiramati says that the next verse, 6.8, is intended to explain the process by which the bodhisattva reaches the path of seeing, the method through which the *dharmadhātu* manifests on the path of seeing.

Prayoga Mārga - Laukikāgradharma - Ānantaryasamādhi

*MSA* 6.8, first three feet: "Realizing intellectually that there is nothing other than mind, he then understands the non-existence of mind. Understanding the non-existence of duality, ...."

"Realizing intellectually that there is nothing other than mind, he then understands the non-existence of mind." On the patience stage the bodhisattva has removed the obstruction of adhering to cognitive objects as independent of cognition, and has abided in mind alone. Now he reaches the stage of highest wordly *dharma* (*laukikāgradharma*, still on the *prayoga mārga*), where he realizes that if there is no cognitive object, there can be no cognitive subject. Put another way, on the patience stage, he realized that the objects in his cognition were actually aspects of cognition, hence, aspects of the cognizing subject, mind alone. Now, on the stage of highest worldly *dharma*, he realizes that the very notion of "subject" depends on the notion of a separate "object" which is cognized by it. Since he no longer adheres to such an "object," there is no longer any basis to adhere to a "subject" cognizing it. Thus, he "understands the non-existence of mind," "mind" being cognitive subjectivity. "Understanding the non-existence of duality, ...." The bodhisattva, having comprehended the non-existence of both the object and subject of cognition, abandons the obstructions of subject-object duality and immediately gives rise to the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*) in which the *dharmadhātu* manifests to nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). The point just prior to the path of seeing while on the stage of highest worldly

*dharma* is the *ānantaryasamādhi* (concentration which is uninterrupted) because it precedes the path of seeing without interruption.

Darśana Mārga

*MSA* 6.8, last foot: "... the sage abides in the sphere of *dharma* (*dharmadhātu*) which is free of it."

When the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*) arises, the bodhisattva dwells in the *dharmadhātu* which is free of subject-object duality. Seeing reality directly in itself removes one level of deluded passion (*kleśa*) adhering to duality (*darśanaprahātavya kleśa*).

Bhāvanā Mārga (resulting in *Āśrayaparāvṛtti*, the *Buddhabhūmi*)

*MSA* 6.9: "The force of the sage's nonconceptual gnosis, always and everywhere gone to equality, purges the impenetrable host of faults, his [impure] basis, like a powerful antidote dispels poisen."

The force of the bodhisattva's nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*), repeatedly practised on the path of meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*), dispels the poisen of the obstructions (*āvaraṇa*) like a powerful antidote. His nonconceptual gnosis is a gnosis (*jñāna*) which does not conceptualize either an object or a subject. The word "his" in "his basis" refers to the bodhisattva on the path of meditation. The "basis" is his basal consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). The "faults" are the passion obstructions

(*kleśāvaraṇa*) and propensities of subject-object duality (*grāhyagrāhaka vāsanā*) which reside in his basal consciousness. Like a powerful antidote dispels poisen, the nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) meditated on the path of meditation utterly eliminates all passion and cognitive obstructions, even the subtlest, thereby bringing about the complete transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) where the nonconceptual gnosis of the Buddha stage (*buddhabhūmi*) manifests.[70]

According to this description, and similar descriptions throughout early Yogācāra literature, the four *samādhis* which traverse the four levels of the *prayoga mārga* are the entrance into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) at the *darśana mārga*. This nonconceptual gnosis is strengthened and perfected through the *bhāvanā mārga* until it culminates in buddhahood. The object of that gnosis is *tathatā/dharmadhātu*. But because the epistemological distinction between subject and object is precisely what is removed by the entrance into the gnosis, the final result, buddhahood, can no longer adequately be described as a "knower" of ultimate reality. The conceptual construction of "knower" and "known" is no longer made. It is for this reason that buddhahood, as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, is expressed through either one or both of the terms we have been discussing (*nirvikalpajñāna* and *tathatāviśuddhi* or their equivalents). The sense of "*nirvikalpajñāna*" is weighed more toward the cognitive subject, connoting an unobstructed realization (*nirvikalpajñāna*), while the sense of "*tathatāviśuddhi*" is weighed more

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70 *MSA vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe-dge mi, fols. 79a5-80b7.

toward the cognitive object, connoting a reality free from obstruction (*tathatāviśuddhi*). Both point to a non-dual knowledge-reality not adequately captured by the epistemological terms we ordinarily use, since such terms presuppose a dualistic, subject-object frame of reference.[71]

Summarizing the four *samādhis* which traverse the *prayoga mārga* to the *darśana mārga*:

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[71] This is a common Yogācāra description of buddhahood as the product of yogic praxis: *tathatāviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna*, all other Buddha qualities being subsumed within those two. Later texts associated with Yogācāra thought extend this theme, characterizing buddhahood as nothing but *tathatāviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna* comprising the *dharmakāya* which is real (*samyak*) and ultimate (*paramārtha*), while the *rūpakāyas*, the *buddhadharmas*, etc. are merely worldly designations (*prajñapti*) imputed to the *dharmakāya*. The *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama sūtra* (ca. Gupta period) says: "The former two *kāyas* [the *rūpakāyas*] are merely imputedly existent, whereas the third *kāya* [the *dharmakāya*] is really existent, since it is the source of the two [*rūpa*] *kāyas*. Why ? Because all Buddhas possess no other qualities apart from universal suchness (*chos kyi de bzhin nyid*) and nonconceptual gnosis (*rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*) .... Universal suchness (*chos kyi de bzhin nyid*) and the gnosis of it (*de bzhin nyid kyi ye shes*) comprise all of a Buddha's qualities." Tibetan edition, Nobel, p. 43. The *Kāyatrayāvataramukhaśāstra* in the sTan 'gyur is ascribed to a Nāgamitra. Its commentary, the *Kāyatrayavṛtti*, is ascribed to Jñānacandra, who is listed in the *Vijāptimātratāsiddhi* as a disciple of Dharmapāla, a well known 6th century Yogācāra master (Brian Brown, p. 422). The *śāstra* says: "Except for stainless suchness and nonconceptual gnosis, the Buddhas have no other qualities." (Pk 5290, Vol. 101, p. 119-1-6 -119- 2-1). The *Kāyatrayavṛtti* comments on this: "Why is the *dharmakāya* alone ultimate [while the *rūpakāyas* are imputed]? To answer this, the root text says: 'Except for stainless suchness (*dri med de bzhin nyid*) and nonconceptual gnosis (*mi rtog ye shes*), ....' 'Stainless' means that [suchness] is free of adventitious stain. 'Nonconceptual gnosis' refers to the gnosis perceiving suchness in such a way that perceiver and perceived are the same. '..., the Buddhas have no other qualities.' This means that apart from these two [stainless suchness and nonconceptual gnosis], there is nothing else. [At the Buddha stage] all things exist in the nature of these two, not in the nature of anything else. This is because all natures other [than these two] are objects of discursive fabrication (*spros pa'i yul*) and therefore false, and the Buddhas have no discursive fabrication." (Pk 5291, Vol. 101, pp. 122-4-5 - 122-5-1).

Refer also to the *PP sūtras* (as quoted in the previous chapter of this thesis) and *Samādhirāja sūtra* (see Regamey, *Samādhirājasūtra*, intro. pp.23-24, chapter 22 pp. 49-59, 83-97) for similar emphases on the *dharmakāya* as the real *kāya*; hence complete identification of buddhahood with suchness (*tathatā*) and its gnosis (*prajñāpāramitā*) alone.

1. *Ālokalabdha samādhi* (Obtainment of the appearance)- The Yogācāras seem to characterize our everyday awareness as follows: even though a cognitive object (such as a tree) appearing within awareness is, in fact, an aspect of that awareness, we generally conceive it to exist outside of awareness. The image of a tree within our cognition is the product of a complex process of sensory integration and conceptual construction. That complex image of "tree," as the product of one's own sensory and cognitive apparatus, is not an external object, an object standing fully formed as "tree" outside of cognition. But, on the pre-reflective and behavioral level, we adhere to our own cognitive image of "tree" as if it existed fully formed and conceptually structured as "tree" before it ever entered our awareness. That is to say that on the pre-reflective level, we are all naive realists. On the first *samādhi*, through the force of much collection of merit and meditation on the aspects of the four noble truths, the *yogi* intellectually negates his adherence to the pre-reflective notion that cognitive objects such as "tree" exist external to consciousness. He comes to experientially understand that cognitive objects are aspects of his own mind which appear to stand outside of his mind through his own conceptualization ("*manojalpa*," "mental verbalization").

2. *Ālokavṛddhi samādhi* - (Increase of the appearance) - Through continued practise, the *yogi's* experience of the non-objectivity of cognitive objects increases (*vṛddhi*) and he now actually sees the objects as aspects of awareness (Sthiramati uses the term "*paśyati*," "he sees").

3. *Tattvaikadeśānupraviṣṭa samādhi* - (Entry into a portion of reality) - Through continued practise, even the appearance of objects as distinct from mind ceases, and the appearance of all as the nature of consciousness becomes vivid. The *yogi* abides in mind alone, *cittamātra.*

4. *Ānantaryasamādhi* - (Uninterrupted) - This *samādhi* begins on the last level of the *prayoga mārga* and leads the *yogi* into the actual nonconceptual gnosis of the *darśana mārga.* Here he realizes that the very notion of "mind only" is no longer tenable, because subjectivity only has meaning in relation to the objectivity which he has not found. Realizing directly the nonexistence of both "subject" and "object," he gains the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*) in which nonconceptual gnosis sees the *dharmadhātu* (nondual reality) directly. It is this realization, which, when brought to perfection through the path of meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*) becomes the very essence of full enlightenment, the "body of the Buddhas in its essence," i.e. the *svābhāvikakāya.*[72]

*MSA* vss. 14.28-29 describe the culmination of these four yogic stages in the path of seeing (*darśana mārga*). These verses are noteworthy because they emphasize the fact that this very gnosis, reached through these yogic steps, comprises the fundamental transformation

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[72] I am indebted to the Ven. Geshe Lobsang Namgyal for his pointing out to me the great importance of these four *samādhis* in the Yogācāra system of yogic praxis, and for enormously fruitful and enjoyable investigations together (over a period of several days) into the various descriptions of them in Indian Yogācāra texts.

(*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) which when fully perfected becomes buddhahood, the state of perfect purity:

> Then he obtains nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) which is free from perception of duality, supramundane, supreme, stainless.
>
> *MSA* 14.28
>
> *bhāṣya*: From here onwards is the stage of the path of seeing (*darśana mārgāvasthā*). It is free from perception of duality because it is liberated from the perceptions of subject and object. It is supreme by the supremacy of the [*mahāyāna*] vehicle. It is nonconceptual (*nirvikalpaṃ*) because it is free from the conceptualization of subject and object. It is stainless because passions removable by the [path of] seeing are eliminated. Through this it is said to be pure and stainless.
>
> This is his fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), accepted as the first *bhūmi*. It takes measureless eons for it to become perfectly pure.[73] *MSA* 14.29

The bodhisattva's attainment of nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) on the path of seeing permanently removes one level of cognitive obstruction (the "passions removable by the path of seeing"). This cessation of one level of obstruction comprises a fundamental transformation of his mind, which is the first of the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of bodhisattva realization leading to full enlightenment. "It takes measureless eons for it to become perfectly pure" implies that it is this process of fundamental transformation and this gnosis which eventually transform into buddhahood, but only after many more eons of practise.

73 *MSA* 14.28 and *bhāṣya*, 14.29. Levi, pp. 93-94.

The four stages of meditation we have been discussing, the four "*samādhis*" culminating in nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*), are the essential yogic practise described in the principle synoptic treatises of early Yogācāra. Their descriptions in the *DDV* and *MSA* chapter 6 were quoted above. The same four stages of yoga are described at length in *MSA* vss.14.23-26 and *bhāṣya*. They are a crucial part of the yogic praxis explained in the third chapter of the *Msg* (especially *Msg* 3.8, 3.9 and 3.13). They find expression in *MAV* vss. 1.6-7, and are carefully delineated in Sthiramati's *ṭikā* on that text. They are expressed in condensed form in *MSA* vss. 11.47-48, *Msg* 8.20.f. (Lamotte's numbering), *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* vss. 36-37, and *Triṃśika* vs. 28.[74]

Yogācāra Buddhism has often been described in modern scholarly works as an ontological idealism which speculatively reduces all phenomena to the nature of consciousness alone. But early Yogācāra described its yogic praxis in terms of the four yogic stages leading to the gnosis of the *darśana mārga*, which becomes, when perfected, the core realization of buddhahood. And as we can see from the descriptions of these stages above, the yogic process involved does not comprise a speculative philosophy of any kind, let alone a speculative ontology. In Western philosophical terms, it probably correlates better with the project of phenomenology, that is, it involves a careful observation and analysis

[74] Cf. *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, La Vallee Poussin translation, pp. 575-605. Ratnākaraśānti explains these four stages of yoga in his *Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* (Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 122-123). He declares these four yogic stages compatible not only with Yogācāra but also with Madhyamaka practice (*ibid.*, p. 124).

of the structure of what appears to awareness. But it also goes far beyond Western phenomenology insofar as the four yogic stages are meant to lead the practitioner into deeper and deeper strata of consciousness, through an analytical and meditative process which alters, at its most fundamental level, the structure of consciousness itself; hence, the importance of the concept "fundamental transformation" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) as the distinguishing feature of the *svābhāvikakāya.*

*MSA* verses 14.28-29 above and earlier passages from the *DDV* indicated that the attainment of nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna)* at the *darśana mārga* itself comprised a fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) which, when perfected, became buddhahood. Thus, the attainment of nonconceptual gnosis in itself could be viewed as a commencement of enlightenment, the *dharmakāya* or the three *kāyas*, in germinal form. This idea is expressed in portions of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (*Msg*) and its commentaries.

In the *Msg*, the *yoga* of four *samādhis* culminating in *nirvikalpajñāna* is termed "entry into cognition-only" (*vijñaptimātratā praveśa*). This *yoga* is explained in passages 3.7-9 and 3.13. Passage 3.12 explains the reason for the practise of "entry into cognition-only," i.e. the four *samādhis* culminating in the *darśana mārga*:

> What,then, is the purpose of entering into cognition-only? By the supramundane gnosis of concentration and insight (*śamathavipaśyanājñāna*) viewing [the nature of] collected phenomena, and by the gnosis which follows from it (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*) [viewing] the varied ideations, the [*bodhisattva*] eliminates the seeds of the basal consciousness

> (*alayavijñāna*) with their causes and develops the seed of contact with *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāyasparśabīja*), i.e. he undergoes fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtta*). Then, by accomplishing all excellent qualities of a Buddha, he obtains omniscience. It is for this purpose that one enters [cognition-only].[75]

*Msg* chapter 8 is dedicated to nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). Passage 8.13 and its commentaries discuss the outcome of perfecting nonconceptual gnosis:

> Culmination (*niṣṭhā*) of the *bodhisattvas'* nonconceptual gnosis is for the purpose of obtaining the three *kāyas* in pure form and supreme mastery.[76]

Vasubandhu comments:

> "In pure form" is said because here the three *kāyas* are obtained on the very first *bhūmi* (the first *bodhisattva* stage, equivalent to the *darśana mārga*) but it is on the tenth *bhūmi* (just before buddhahood) that they become extremely pure.[77]

In other words, with the first obtainment of nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) on the *darśana mārga*, a germinal form of buddhahood is already obtained. The final perfected form is reached through the gradual perfection of that very gnosis through the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of *bodhisattva* practise.

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75 *Msg* 5.12. Lamotte, p.53.
76 *Msg* 8.13. Lamotte, p.77.
77 *Msg bhāṣya* on 8.13. sDe-dge ri, fol.177a6-b1.

We noted earlier that the concept of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, as the formless essence of buddhahood, was characterized in the *MSA* and its commentaries as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, which was understood throughout early Yogācāra literature as the culmination of a yogic practise issuing in *tathatāviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna*. The *Msg*, another principle Yogācāra source of three *kāya* theory, also characterized buddhahood and *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as *āśrayaparāvṛtti*. Because the *Msg* centered its discussion of the entire yogic path on a Yogācāra theory of the three natures (*trisvabhāva* or *trilakṣaṇa*), its explanation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* was put in those terms. But its explanation is very similar in sense to the explanations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* we have seen above.[78]

The three natures (*trisvabhāva*) are the imagined nature (*parikalpita*), the dependent nature (*paratantra*), and the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna*). All things experienced by sentient beings possess these three natures. In general, the imagined nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) is that aspect of things which is conceptually constructed and designated. In the *Msg* it is identified in particular as conceptually constructed duality, that is, the appearance and adherence to an independent subject and object of cognition which exist separate from each other, independent of

[78] The *MSA* also explains *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in terms of the *trisvabhāva* theory in vss. 11.15-19 and 11.39-45. Different formulations of the *trisvabhāva* theory were coming to expression in 3rd to 6th century Yogācāra, appearing in the *Saṃdhinirmocana* and *Laṅkāvatāra sūtras*, *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, *MSA*, *Msg* and commentaries, *Trisvabhāvakārikā*, *MAV bhāṣya*, and *Triṃśikā*. The *MSA's* explanation of the theory differs in certain interesting respects from other texts', but not in ways which affect the discussion here. Careful comparative analysis of all extant expressions of the theory is still a desideratum.

conceptualization and of the designations "subject" and "object."[79] The dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*) comprises the entire content of conditioned cognition, that is, all data of the senses, the process of conceptual construction and its contents. It is called "dependent" because it comprises all which exists in dependence upon causes and conditions. The perfected nature (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*) is the final reality of things. It is the lack of the duality which is ordinarily imagined and adhered to within the dependent nature. For example, "tree" appearing in awareness as cognitive object, is a product both of sense data and of the conceptual structuring which integrates the data of the senses and applies the designation "tree." But the "tree" as an object within cognition appears to stand apart from the cognizer, as if independent of that constructive process. The appearance of and adherence to such a "tree" is the imagined nature which is false. The sense data, the process of conceptual construction and its content is the dependent nature which in fact exists. The non-existence of the imagined nature within the dependent nature, as well as the gnosis realizing that non-existence, is the perfected nature.[80]

Metaphors are often used in Yogācāra literature to explain the three natures, one being the metaphor of a mirage of water in the desert. When such a mirage occurs, a person sees and believes there to be real water

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79 My definitions for the three natures are given on a level of generality which I hope makes them fairly generally applicable to early Yogācāra, in spite of the diversity of expressions mentioned in the preceding note. These definitions are based on the presentation of the three natures throughout the *Msg*, as well as their expression in *MAV* chapter 1, *MSA* chapter 11, and the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*. In the *Msg*, they are initially defined in passages 2.2-2.4, Lamotte, pp. 24-26.

80 See *MAV* 3.10-3.13, 3.22 and commentaries on *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* as both *avikāra*, (immutable, *tathatā*) and *aviparyāsa* (unerring, *jñāna/marga*).

present in the distance, even though there is only a mirage. This corresponds to the imagined nature. Still, the *appearance* of water in the distance, and all the factors which condition such an appearance, do exist. This corresponds to the dependent nature. The lack of any real water within that appearance corresponds to the perfected nature.[81]

Chapters nine and ten of the *Msg* are its final chapters. They describe buddhahood as the result of the yogic praxis of the bodhisattva explained in earlier chapters. Chapter nine describes buddhahood as the final, complete elimination of mental afflictions and defilements (*phalaprahāṇa*) by nonconceptual gnosis. Chapter ten describes buddhahood as the gnosis itself, the result of the yogic path (*phalajñāna*). Turning first to chapter nine, *Msg* 9.1 says:

> The bodhisattvas' elimination (*prahāṇa*) is a non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*). Its characteristic is basal transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) [into] a basis (*āśraya*) which has eliminated affliction (*kleśa*) without rejecting cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*).
>
> Cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) comprises the afflicted portion (*saṃkleśabhāga*) of the dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*). *Nirvāṇa* comprises the purified portion (*vyavadānabhāga*) of it.
>
> The basis (*āśraya*) is the dependent nature, comprising both [afflicted and purified portions].
>
> Transformation (*parāvṛtti*) is the dependent nature when its antidote (*pratipakṣa*) [for affliction] has arisen and has purged its afflicted portion, reducing it to its purified portion.[82]

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81 See Lamotte, *Msg* "Notes and References," p.18* for a bibliography of this and other such metaphors in early Yogācāra literature.

82 *Msg* 9.1. Lamotte, p.81.

Asvabhāva's commentary on this explains:

> What is the basis of transformation? [The *Msg]* says "Cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) comprises [the afflicted portion] of the dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*)." Cyclic existence consists of the mistaken mentalities and mental factors which relentlessly drag one by the rope of recurrent birth and death. The "afflicted portion" is the portion [of the dependent nature] which is the imagined aspect (*parikalpitākara*). *Nirvāṇa* comprises [the dependent nature's] purified portion, i.e. it comprises the portion lacking the imagined entity. The basis (*āśraya*) comprises both. It is the dependent nature.
>
> Of what is it the basis? It is the basis of transformation, associated with that. .... How does that transformation occur? "[Transformation] is the dependent nature when its antidote [for affliction] has arisen...," i.e. when nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) has arisen. "... and has purged the afflicted portion,..." "Afflicted portion" refers to the mistaken portion of subject-object duality; "purged" means there is total transformation. "..., reducing it to its purified portion," i.e. reducing it to the real (*vastu*) which is free of subject-object duality. That lack of subject-object duality, being inexpressible, is to be personally experienced.[83]

These passages explain buddhahood as *āśrayaparāvṛtti/parivṛtti*, the transformation of the basis, where the basis is understood to be the dependent nature, *paratantrasvabhāva*. By the force of nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*), the defiled portion of the dependent nature, the falsely imagined duality, is expelled. In other words, nonconceptual gnosis removes the imagined nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) which previously hid reality. This reduces the dependent nature to its pure essence, free of imagined duality. That is the perfected nature

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[83] *Msg Upanibandhana* on 9.1. sDe-dge ri, fols. 273b5-274a3.

(*parinispannasvabhāva*), equivalent to *tathatāviśuddhi*.[84] *Msg* passage 10.3, explaining *svābhāvikakāya-dharmakāya* as *āśrayaparāvṛtti* gives the same account. These descriptions, although couched in terms of the *trisvabhāva* theory, closely parallel the descriptions of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* quoted from the *MSA* and *DDV* earlier. In the *Msg* as in those texts, the yogic praxis culminating in buddhahood as fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) involves two fundamental principles which comprise an undifferentiated, non-dual realization of reality: *nirvikalpajñāna* and *tathatāviśuddhi* (where *vyavadānabhāga paratantrasvabhāva* and *parinispannasvabhāva* are *Msg* equivalents of *tathatāviśuddhi*).[85]

In fact, at one point, the author of the *Msg* explicitly equates his explanations of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* with those of the *MSA*. At *Msg* 9.2.4 it is said that a bodhisattva's *āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the disappearance of all signs, all that is unreal, with the appearance of the real. This is close to the expression of *MSA* verses19.53-54 which were quoted earlier. And the *Msg's* author, seeing that similarity, quotes those same verses as a summary of his own account:[86]

84 See *Msg* 10.1.1, 10.3.1 on *svābhāvikakāya* = *dharmakāya* whose character is *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, explained as in *Msg* 9.1. See *Msg* 10.3.4 and 10.3.5 on *dharmakāya* as *tathatāviśuddhi*. Lamotte, pp. 83-85.

85 See also *Msg* 8.18 with commentaries on the inseparability of *nirvikalpajñāna* and *tathatā*.

86 *Msg* 9.2.4 and 9.3. Lamotte, p. 82.

*Msg* 9.3 = *MSA* 19.53-54:

For fools, reality (*tattvaṃ*) is covered and it is unreality (*atattvaṃ*) which completely appears.
But for *bodhisattvas*, having removed that [covering], reality completely appears.

The non-appearance of the non-existent and the appearance of the existent are to be realized (*jñeya*).
This is liberation, fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), because one proceeds freely.

7. Summary

Earlier we noted that in the Abhidharma tradition, the *buddhadharmas* (the four fearlessnesses, ten powers, etc.) were taken to be the essence of buddhahood and were therefore presented as the main description of it. In the Yogācāra tradition, on the contrary, the *buddhadharmas* were categorized as adjunct qualities of buddhahood (*yoga*), but not as its very essence (*svabhāva*). The list of *buddhadharmas* was retained as a lesser description of buddhahood which still retained validity from a phenomenal point-of-view. But as an historical survival within the Yogācāra scholastic treatment of enlightenment, it was not at the center of that treatment. At the center of the Yogācāra theory of buddhahood was the concept of *tathatāviśuddhi-nirvikalpajñāna* (purified suchness-nonconceptual gnosis), the Buddha's perfect gnosis of ultimate reality. This non-dual reality-gnosis was categorized within Yogācāra as the very

essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood and as its defining feature. It comprised the *svābhāvikakāya*, understood to be the formless *dharmakāya* (familiar from the *PP sūtras*) taken as the very essence of enlightenment (' *kāyo buddhānām svābhāvika dharmakāya*").

The *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* was identified with *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, fundamental transformation. This was a model of enlightenment involving the transformation of the psycho-physical make-up of the practitioner into the state of buddhahood through yogic praxis. In Yogācāra texts, it involved the notion of the disappearance of the unreal with the appearance of the real, the gradual purification of suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) by entry into nonconceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) through stages of yoga. The reason that the concept of *tathatāviśuddhi/nirvikalpajñāna* was at the center of the Yogācāra theory of buddhahood is therefore quite clear. In the Yogācāra tradition, buddhology was a natural extrapolation of its theories of praxis and gnoseology. Buddhahood understood as *tathatāviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna*, the *svābhāvikakāya*, a nondual, undifferentiated reality-gnosis, was conceived of as the natural outcome of the yogic praxis described in the principle early Yogācāra texts.

# CHAPTER V

# YOGĀCĀRA BUDDHOLOGY AND GNOSEOLOGY: THE SVĀBHĀVIKAKĀYA'S RELATION TO THE WORLD, RŪPAKĀYAS AS GNOSIS IN THE FORM OF COMPASSIONATE ACTION

## 1. Buddhahood as Non-Abiding Nirvāṇa (Apratiṣṭhita Nirvāṇa)

If one looks at the principal schools of Indian religious thought which have endured, it appears to be a requirement of Indian soteriology that the final result of religious discipline be an unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) state permanently free from the power of worldly conditions. This requirement held true for all schools of Buddhism.[1] As noted in chapter 2 above, the attainment of nirvāṇa in early and Abhidharma Buddhism was understood as the attainment of an unconditioned state, liberated from

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[1] Sthiramati's comments on *Triṃśikā*, vs. 30 offer insight into the general importance for Indian soteriology that the final goal of spiritual practise be unconditioned. *Triṃśikā* vs. 30 (Levi p. 43) describes full enlightenment, buddhahood: "*sa evānāsravo dhātur acintyaḥ kuśalo dhruvaḥ/ sukho vimuktikāyo 'sau dharmākhyo 'yaṃ mahāmuneḥ//.*" "It is the undefiled realm, inconceivable, good, immutable, blissful, *vimuktikāya*, called the *dharma* [*kāya*] of the great *muni*." Sthiramati (Levi, p.44) comments: "*dhruvo nityatvāt/ akṣayatayā/ sukho nityatvādeva yadanityaṃ tadduḥkhaṃ ayaṃ ca nitya iti/ asmāt sukhaḥ/.*" "It is immutable because of its permanence and its inexhaustiblity. It is blissful precisely because of its permanence. For what is impermanent is suffering; but this is permanent, hence blissful."

the conditions of saṃsāra. In Mahāyāna soteriology, this feature of nirvāṇa was preserved. But perhaps the most important distinguishing feature of the Mahāyāna was its paradoxical notion that nirvāṇa, even as an unconditioned state, was to be attained for the purpose of acting effectively in the conditioned world for others. The bodhisattva aimed for a nirvāṇa not subject to the conditions of saṃsāra (*karma* and *kleśa*) in order to be free to act effectively within saṃsāra for others.

Buddhahood, the result of the Mahāyāna path, is therefore understood to be a state at once unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and conditioned (*saṃskṛta*): personally free from conditions of *karma* and *kleśa* but fully active within the conditioned world on behalf of others. A common term for it was "*apratiṣṭhita nirv*[illegible] "non-abiding nirvāṇa," meaning that buddhahood is restricted neither by saṃsāra nor by a quiescent liberation from it. It is a state which is free from the power of worldly conditions (*karma* and *kleśa*) without standing apart from the world.[2] A Buddha is neither imprisoned in saṃsāra like ordinary beings, nor has he/she left saṃsāra to abide in a quiescent nirvāṇa of the sort envisioned in early Buddhism. This is because a Buddha's gnosis was understood to pervade the world and take form in it to show others the way to freedom.

The Mahāyāna, then, was understood to have a dual purpose: the purpose for onesself being freedom from saṃsāric conditions (*karma* and *kleśa*), the purpose for others being one's immersion in saṃsāra to teach

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[2] On *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa* see: *Msg* 9.1 (quoted at the end of the previous chapter), *Msg* 10.3; *MSA* 9.14 *bhāṣya*, *MSA* 9.45, 9.70, 17.32, 17.42, 18.70, 19.62. For other references throughout Mahāyāna literature, see Lamotte, *La Somme*, pp. 47*-48*.

and help them. The Mahāyāna path involves two basic modes of practise to achieve those purposes: the cultivation of insight (*prajñā*), and the application of methods of skillful service to others (*upāya*). These practises generate collections of gnosis and merit (*jñānapuṇyasambhāra*) which result in ultimate benefit for self as *svābhāvikakāya* (or *dharmakāya*) and ultimate benefit for others as *rūpakāya* (*sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*).

In the previous chapter we focussed on the yogic development of insight or gnosis which ultimately issues in the *svābhāvikakāya*. We noted that at the *darśana mārga*, the bodhisattva's mind experiences a direct, nondual realization of suchness. When this realization is perfected at buddhahood, it never ceases. We saw that the permanent cognitive identification of gnosis and suchness (*nirvikalpajñāna/tathatāviśuddhi*), as the essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood, is the defining feature of the *svābhāvikakāya*. Because suchness is unconditioned, its nondual realization, the *svābhāvikakāya*, constitutes the attainment of the unconditioned state, nirvāṇa. The *svābhāvikakāya* is also unconditioned in the sense that its attainment proffers complete freedom from the power of *karma* and *kleśa*, i.e. personal freedom from conditions of saṃsāra. The *svābhāvikakāya*, then, constitutes the unconditioned part of *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*.

But, as mentioned above, buddhahood is the outcome not only of the practise of insight or gnosis (*prajñā/jñāna*), but also of the cultivation of compassion in the form of skillful service to others (*upāya*). Just as the practise of insight issues, at final enlightenment, in the *svābhāvikakāya*,

the practise of skillful service naturally issues in the manifestation of various forms (*rūpa*) as the *svābhāvikakāya's* means of expression and compassionate activity in the world. These forms are referred to as "*rūpakāya*" ("form body") in Mahāyāna sūtras and śāstras, including both *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*, and constituting the part of *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa* which operates within the conditioned world. The *rūpakāya*, although a manifestation of the unconditioned *svābhāvikakāya*, is subject to the conditions of the world since it operates within the world. Hence, its various manifestations are only encountered by those who have created the appropriate (karmic) conditions to do so, saints and other beings with sufficient spiritual merit.

The theory of *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*, therefore, involved the notion of a state which was somehow both unconditioned and operative within conditions, corresponding to *svābhāvikakāya* on the one hand, and *sāmbhogikakāya/nairmāṇikakāya* on the other.

## 2. Svābhāvikakāya as Ontological Basis of the Rūpakāyas, Epistemologically Exclusive to Buddhas

In the earliest literature which taught three *kāyas*, the three are distinguished not by reference to an ontological division within buddhahood itself, but by reference to the different types of person for whom buddhahood manifests. As we noted in the previous chapter, ontologically, buddhahood is a simple, undifferentiated realization:

*tathatāviśuddhi*/ *nirvikalpajñāna*, the *dharmakāya*. This, understood as the essence (*svabhāva*) of enlightenment, was referred to as "*svābhāvikakāya*." But while the *svābhāvikakāya* is "invisible to gods and men," the other two *kāyas* are the ways in which that essence manifests to others (see sections 3. and 4. of the previous chapter). Thus, ontologically, buddhahood was understood as one, the *dharmakāya*; while operationally and epistemologically, it was divided into three: the *dharmakāya* in its unmanifest essence (the *svābhāvikakāya*), and the *dharmakāya* in its dual manifestation to others (as *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*).

We turn to *MSA* 9.60 and *bhāṣya* once again as a principal source of three *kāya* theory within early Yogācāra. As noted in chapter 4, section 4 above, *MSA* 9.59 explained the three *kāyas* as operational modes (*vṛtti*) of the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*. The text continues:

> *svābhāviko 'tha sāṃbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko 'paraḥ/*
> *kāyabhedā hi buddhānām prathamastu dvayāśrayaḥ/* *MSA* 9.60
>
> Thus the divisions of the body of the Buddhas are: the body in its essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation. But the first is the basis of the [other] two//
>
> *trividhaḥ kāyo buddhānām/ svābhāviko dharmakāya āśrayaparāvṛttilak-saṇaḥ/ sāṃbhogiko yena parṣanmaṇḍaleṣu dharmasaṃbhogaṃ karoti/ nairmāṇiko yena nirmāṇena sattvārthaṃ karoti/* *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*
>
> The body of the Buddhas is threefold, [being]: 1. In essence (*svābhāvika*), the *dharmakāya*, whose characteristic is fundamental transformation. 2. in shared enjoyment (*sāṃbhogika*), that through which it brings enjoyment of dharma

to the circles of assembly. 3. as emanation (*nairmāṇika*), the emanation through which it works for the benefit of beings.

The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, basing itself on the *MSA*, clarifies its notion that the three *kāyas* are distinguished not ontologically (since all share the same essence) but epistemologically in terms of how and for whom they appear. The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* says, "The *kāya* of the *tathāgatas*, which is the purity of the *dharma* realm (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*), is undivided. However, because it operates with a three *kāya* distinction, it is said to have operational divisions."[3] In other words, the division into three *kāyas* distinguishes different functional aspects of the *dharmakāya* (= *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*), while its ontological oneness is affirmed. It is in this sense that the latter two *kāyas* are said to be "based" on the first. The *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is the ontological essence of which all other qualities of buddhahood are composed.[4]

The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* then draws the distinctions between the *kāyas* epistemologically, with reference to the type of living being for whom each appears. The *svābhāvikakāya* is subtle, difficult to fathom, known only to those who have realized it, the Buddhas. The *sāmbhogikakāya* is the form under which the *svābhāvikakāya* manifests in the pure realms, to share the enjoyment of dharma with *ārya bodhisattvas*. The *nairmāṇikakāya* comprises the forms under which it manifests

3 *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 125, lines 6-9.
4 *MSA* 9.66 and its commentaries explain the notion that all *Buddha kāyas* are the "same in basis" ("āśrayena samā"). It means that there is no distinction in the *dharmadhātu*. In other words, as *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, *dharmakāya*, etc., all *kāyas* are ontologically one.

throughout the universe, assisting beings less spiritually mature than *ārya bodhisattvas*. Thus, the *kāyas* are divided operationally according to their functions, and epistemologically according to the type of living being for whom each appears.[5] Ontologically all aspects of buddhahood are one: *svābhāvikakāya*, *dharmakāya*, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*. Epistemologically that one essence, when cognized by beings of different cognitive capacities, takes the form of the *rūpakāyas*, and when conceptualized, is understood in terms of the various qualities associated with buddhahood such as the *buddhadharmas*. Sthiramati's explanation of *MSA* 9.60-62 is very close on these points to that of the *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*.[6]

Throughout Yogācāra literature, the precise content of Buddha's awareness is explicitly held to be a mystery to non-Buddhas. A principal characteristic ascribed to the *svābhāvikakāya* in these texts is its epistemological exclusivity. The *svābhāvikakāya* is described as "*pratyātmavedanīya*," knowable only through personal realization. In the previous chapter we quoted *MSA* 21.61, which said: "... You [Buddha] are beheld in the worlds and in the assemblies/ Yet are entirely invisible to gods and men." The *MSA bhāṣya* identifies Buddha's appearance "in

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5 *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

6 Sthiramati, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 136a2 - b6. Along similar lines, the *Kāyatrayasūtra*, Pk Vol. 37, #949 says: "*chos kyi sku ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i ngo gang la blta bar bya'o/ longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku ni byang chub sems dpa'i ngo gang la blta bar bya'o/ sprul pa'i sku ni mos pas spyod pa'i so so skye bo'i ngo gang la blta bar bya'o/.*" "The *dharmakāya* is to be seen from the perspective of the *tathāgata*. The *sāmbhogikakāya* is to be seen from the perspective of a bodhisattva. The *nairmāṇikakāya* is to be seen from the perspective of an ordinary being engaged in resolute practise." Recall also section 2 of the previous chapter, where Sthiramati explained how *buddhadharmas* and *rūpakāyas* describe buddhahood from a phenomenal point of view but do not define it, since they are not its essence.

the worlds" as the *nairmāṇikakāya*, its appearance "in the assemblies" as the *sāmbhogikakāya*, while its very being, "invisible to gods and men," is the *dharmakāya* (*svābhāvikakāya*). Asvabhāva, commenting on this, says: "Because the *dharmakāya* is knowable only through personal realization (*pratyātmavedanīya*), it is characterized as inconceivable (*acintya*). As it is not an object of inference, there is nothing in the world which could serve as an example for it."[7] *MSA* 9.62 says that the *svābhāvikakāya* is "the same" (*sama*) and "subtle" (*sūkśma*). The *MSA bhāṣya* says these terms mean, respectively, that the *svābhāvikakāya* is undifferentiated and difficult to know. The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* commenting on this says: "It [the *svābhāvikakāya*] is the same for all *tathāgatas*, subtle, and difficult to know. For this reason it is said to be inaccessible to speculative investigation; and is not an object of inference, being beyond ascertainment by reason."[8] The *Msg* says: "It [the *dharmakāya*] has the characteristic of inconceivability (*acintyalakṣaṇa*), because as purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) it must be realized personally, is without compare in the world, and is not an object of inference."[9]

Such frequent expressions of the *svābhāvikakāya's* epistemological exclusivity were probably intended to limit speculation concerning the precise content of Buddha's awareness, on the grounds that its content was too different from an ordinary being's awareness to be fully understood or

[7] *MSA ṭīkā*, sDe dge bi, 174a6-7.
[8] *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p.125, lines 14-17.
[9] *Msg* 10.3.5, Lamotte, p. 85. On *dharmakāya* (*svābhāvikakaya*) as *acintya* and *pratyātmavedanīya*, see also *Trimśikā* and *bhāṣya* by Sthiramati, Levi, pp. 43-44; *RGV* and *vyākhyāna*, I.5-8, II.31-33, 38-48; Takasaki, pp. 156-160, 323, 325-8.

described by merely extrapolating from the epistemological structures of ordinary awareness.[10] The texts delimit the range of discussion of Buddha's gnosis to very general and often metaphorical discussions which hearken back to earlier scriptures. Precisely what it means for a yogi's mind (presumably an impermanent) to have a nondual realization of suchness (a permanent) is not detailed. Nor is it explained precisely how a Buddha's nondual realization of undifferentiated suchness cognizes the differentiated world so as to take action within it to teach and help beings. These issues not only were not fully explained, but were considered impossible to explain with any real precision. The precise content of a Buddha's enlightenment was understood to be quite literally inconceivable (*acintya*), meaning, as the texts explicitly say, that it is beyond the range of inference, beyond precise extrapolation from our own limited experience, and therefore beyond precise description in language.[11]

The Yogācāra tradition, then, makes it quite explicit that there are severe limitations on our comprehension of buddhahood, and in particular, on our comprehension of the relation between the aspects of buddhahood that are unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and concern suchness or

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10 We saw in the previous chapter that the theory of *svābhāvikakāya* was an extrapolation from the Yogācāra theories of yogic praxis and gnoseology. But it was probably considered sheer hubris to think that one could describe the precise content of the *svābhāvikakāya's* awareness merely by extrapolation from the limited epistemological categories of ordinary beings.

11 Cf. *Samādhirājasūtra*, chapter 22 vss. 50-52, Regamey's Sanskrit edition pp. 58-59: "*agrāhyaḥ sarvasatvehi/ na pramāṇena gṛhyate/ tathā hi kāyo budddhasya/ apramāṇo acintiyaḥ// apramāṇehi dharmehi/ pramāṇaṃ tatra kalpate/ akalpitehi dharmehi/ buddho py evam akalpitaḥ// pramāṇaṃ kalpam ākhyāto/ apramāṇaṃ akalpitam/ akalpyaḥ kalpāpagatas/ tena buddho acintiyaḥ//.*"

emptiness (*tathatā*, *śūnyatā*), and those which conform to the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) world and concern phenomena. But certain principles of the relation between buddhahood and the world are broadly described, often metaphorically, which warrant investigation. Each could serve as the subject of extensive future research. For our purpose, we will look briefly at certain important correlations between conditioned and unconditioned aspects of buddhahood as regards gnosis, action, and embodiment.

### 3. The Paradox of Buddhahood as Non-Abiding Nirvāṇa: An Unconditioned Source of Pervasive Activity in a Conditioned World

Recalling the discussion of the previous chapter, we noted the identification of the *svābhāvikakāya* with *tathatāviśuddhi*, the final non-dual realization of ultimate reality purified of all cognitive obstructions. The term "*tathatāviśuddhi*" has two semantic components, each of which connotes an aspect of buddhahood which is unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and permanent (*nitya*): 1. *tathatā*, the Buddha's cognitive identification with suchness, the non-dual, ultimate nature of things which never changes. 2. *viśuddhi*, complete purification, the permanent cessation of the cognitive and moral obstructions (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇa*) which had hidden suchness and had kept one in *saṃsāra*. As *tathatāviśuddhi*, the *svābhāvikakāya* is unconditioned and permanent, both in its identification

with unconditioned suchness and in its permanent cessation of the obscurations which used to cover suchness prior to enlightenment.[12]

Other themes in early Mahāyāna and Yogācāra literature also contribute to the notion of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and permanent (*nitya*). The attainment of *svābhāvikakāya* is the the final realization of *tathatā*, suchness. But suchness is not newly created or subject to particular conditions. It has always been the case. What is newly attained through yogic practise is the awareness of it. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *svābhāvikakāya's* realization of suchness is non-dual, so that from the perspective of the realization,

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[12] Recall passages in the *PP sūtras* which identify buddhahood with suchness, and therefore as immutable, e.g. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* PP, fol. 513, Conze's *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, p.291: "Tathagatas certainly do not come from anywhere, nor do they go anywhere. Because Suchness does not move, and the Tathagata is Suchness.... The Suchness of these dharmas and the Suchness of all dharmas, and the Suchness of the Tathagata are simply this one single Suchness." *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* PP, fol. 351, Conze's *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, p.212: "Subhuti: 'What then is this supreme enlightenment?' The Lord: 'It is Suchness. But Suchness neither grows nor diminishes."

*Msg* 10.3.4: "It [the *dharmakāya*] has the characteristic of permanence, because its characteristic is purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*)...." Lamotte p. 85, 273-4 (see also Asvabhāva's *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 277a2-3). *Msg* 10.29.2: "The *kāya* of the *tathāgatas* is permanent (*nitya*) because the *tathāgatas* are ever freed from stain." Lamotte pp. 93, 315. Asvabhāva comments that this means the *tathāgatakāya* is permanent because its essence is purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*). *Msg* 10.37: "Why is it said [in *sūtras*] 'the *kāya* of the *tathāgatas* is permanent,' when the *sāmbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya* are both impermanent? Because the *niṣyandakāya* [i.e. the *sāmbhogikakāya* ] and the *nairmāṇikakāya* are both based upon the *dharmakāya* [which is permanent]....." Lamotte, pp. 98, 339-340 (see also Asvabhāva's *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 295a3-5).

*MSA* 9.66b *bhāṣya*: "*.../ prakṛtyā nityatā svābhāvikasya svabhāvena nityatvāt/*" "The *svābhāvikakāya* is intrinsically permanent, because of its permanence by nature." Sthiramati's commentary, sDe dge mi, fols. 138a7-b1: ""*rang bzhin rtag pa ni chos kyi sku ste/ chos kyi sku ni rang bzhin gyis skye 'gag med pa'i rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir ro/.*" "Intrinsic permanence [applies to] the *dharmakāya*, because intrinsically the *dharmakāya* is the nature of nonarising and nonceasing." Cf. *MSA* 9.23 and *bhāṣya*; *RGV* 1.5-8 with commentary, *RGV* 2.18-28, 2.29-35, 2.44-46, 66-68.

subject and object are no longer distinguished. The non-dual realization of suchness, then, may be understood to entail an identification with its unconditioned nature.[13] We also saw in the previous chapter that the core yogic practise leading to *svābhāvikakāya* was described in terms of the disappearance of the illusory with the appearance of the real. This, too, emphasizes the fact that the true nature of mind and world (*tathatā*, *dharmatā*, *tattvam*) is an unchanging nature. It has always been present. It was first hidden, and then, through yogic practise, revealed; but it has never changed. The attainment of the *svābhāvikakāya*, then, is not the creation of something new, but the full revelation of what has always been the case.[14]

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13 *Msg* 7.11.1-2, 9: "Permanent qualities (*dharmas*) are Buddha qualities, because the *dharmakāya* is permanent. Qualities of elimination are Buddha qualities, because the Buddha has eliminated all obstructions (*āvaraṇa*)..... Unstained qualities are Buddha qualities, because perfected suchness (*niṣpannā tathatā*) is unstained by any obstruction (*āvaraṇa*)." Asvabhāva's *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fols. 265b2-3: "The *dharmakāya* has fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) as its characteristic. It is suchness (*tathatā*) free of all obstructions; permanent, because immutable. It [the *dharmakāya*] is also supreme gnosis (*anuttara jñāna*) which is unstained and unobstructed, because it is undefiled, and is not a [karmic] maturation like the formless [realms]. That [supreme gnosis] is permanent (*nitya*), because it is conjoined with suchness (*tathatāmiśra*), and because it is unconditioned by the passions and their actions (*karma* and *kleśa*)." *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇi*, quoted in Davidson, p.206: "Fundamental transformation [*āśrayaparāvṛtti*] is permanent [*nitya*] and nonappropriating [*anādāna*], since it has been changed by the path focussing on thusness (*tathatālambanamārga*]." See also Davidson pp. 210-212 paraphrasing the *Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī* on liberated consciousness (*vimuktavijñāna*), free of obstruction, being unconditioned. Cf. *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, D.T. Suzuki's translation, p.188: "However, Mahāmati, there is another sense in which the Tathagata can be said to be permanent. How? Because the knowledge arising from the attainment of enlightenment is of a permanent nature, the Tathagata is permanent. Mahāmati, this knowledge, as it is attained intuitively by the Tathagatas, Arhats, Fully-Enlightened Ones, is, indeed, permanent."

14 Refer to quotes and references of the previous chapter. Cf. Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 92-4-8 to 5-2 (discussed in chapter 9, sec. 3 below): "*chos kyi dbyings dang ldan par gyur pa zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad kyi rnam pa thams cad du rnam par dag pa'i rang bzhin te ngo bo nyid gang yin pa de ni*

A related theory prominent in all the Yogācāra texts we have been discussing is the theory of the innate, luminous purity of the mind (*cittam prakṛtiprabhāsvaram, cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*). This theory, too, contributes to the notion of enlightenment as unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and permanent. It holds that the mind of each sentient being is essentially pure, luminous awareness, while the cognitive and moral impurities which cover the mind, being adventitious to it, are not part of its essence. All mental impurities, passions and cognitive obstructions, are therefore removable through the practise of the yogic path, and when removed, leave just the pure, luminous essence of the mind which constitutes enlightenment. In this theory too, the real, the innate purity, is unconditioned. It does not need to be created. The practise of the yogic path just removes what has covered it, revealing the pure mental essence which has always been present and has never changed.[15]

Since the theory of innate pure mind appears throughout early Yogācāra literature (see previous note) we should look at one typical textual example of it. The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga's* final words sum up

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*bcos ma ma yin pa'i don gyis na/ bcom ldan 'das kyi ngo bo nyid kyi sku yin par shes par bya ste/ ngo bo nyid ces bya ba ni bcos ma ma yin pa zhes bya ba ni 'jig rten na grags pa yin no/ 'jig rten las 'das pa'i lam ni de 'thob par byed pa yin gyi byed pa po ma yin no/."*

15 References to *cittam prakṛtiprabhāsvaraṃ*, innate pure luminosity of mind, appear in the following texts we have been discussing and their commentaries: *MSA* 6.1 (*bhāṣya*), 11.13 ff., 11.41, 13.16-13.19, 18.43 (*bhāṣya*); *MAV* 1.22, 5.22; *DDV*, sDe dge phi, fol. 49a4-5 (*DDV vṛtti*, sDe dge bi, fols. 38a3-b6); *RGV* 1.25, 1.49-1.50, 1.57-1.60, 1.63-1.68, 1.129, 2.8-2.9; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, pp. 65-67. Important discussions by modern scholars of *cittam prakṛtiprabhāsvaraṃ* in Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* include: Ruegg, *La Theorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra*, pp. 409-454; Takasaki, *A Study of the Ratnagotravibhāga*, intro. pp. 34-44; Regamey, *Three Chapters from Samādhirājasūtra*, pp. 25-26; Schayer, "Precanonical Buddhism," p.131.

its theory of *āśrayaparivṛtti*, its model of full enlightenment, as follows: "Analogies for fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) are the sky, gold, water, etc."[16] The *DDV vṛtti*, commenting on this, says:

> Although there has been a transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) [at full enlightenment], nothing has undergone an actual change. How this is so is demonstrated by the analogies [in the root text]. ....
>
> For example, intrinsically, the sky is just pure. But it is not considered so when it is beclouded by fog, etc., which are adventitious to it. When it is free of the [fog, etc.], it is then [considered] pure. ... The purity is not originated. Rather, the purity is just [newly] seen, when it has become free of what prevented it from being seen. The fact that the sky is [newly] perceived to be pure does not mean that it should be taken as something which has undergone change. Likewise, gold exists simply in its own splendor. But when its luster is hidden by adventitious stain, one does not perceive [the splendor], and when it is freed from the stain, its [splendor] is perceived. That is all. By perceiving [the splendor of gold], one is not creating it. Similarly, water exists simply in its own sparkling clarity. But the water, through its association with mud, is not perceived as [clear]. And when freed from the mud, it is perceived [as such]. That is all. Perceiving it as such does not cause the substance of the water, which has been continually present, to generate [clarity], nor is that [clarity] created. One should not take the water to be something which has undergone a change just because one [newly] perceives its clarity.
>
> In the same way, the innate luminosity (*prakṛti prabhāsvaraṃ*) in fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) is not previously non-existent. Rather, through the appearance of adventitious obstructions, it did not appear, just like the impurity [in the analogy of the sky], the lack of splendor [in the analogy of the gold] and the lack of clarity [in the analogy of the water]. That is all. When the [innate luminosity] is freed from those [obstructions], it appears. From this, through that transformation, the true nature of things (*dharmatā*) comes to appear; but by its appearing it is not [newly] generated, nor is it

16 *DDV*, sDe dge phi, fol. 49a4-5.

> created. Because there is no [creation] of it, the true nature of things (*dharmatā*) and the fundamental transformation consisting of it (*tadprabhāvitāśrayaparivṛtti*) are permanent (*nitya*).[17]

Although the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is characterized as unconditioned and permanent for all the reasons above, it has another most important, and apparently contradictory, characteristic: it gives rise to pervasive activity throughout the world to assist living beings who are still trapped in it. An unconditioned entity, then, is the source of conditioned activity. This paradox is entailed by the theory of *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*, non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, which was so fundamental to the Mahāyāna as the feature distinguishing it from non-Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism.

*MSA* 9.14 *bhāṣya* shows how the Mahāyāna theory of *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa* gives rise to the paradox of buddhahood as both unconditioned and conditioned. Describing buddhahood as fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), it says:

> Its operation is non-dual (*advayā vṛtti*) because of its abiding neither in *saṃsāra* nor in *nirvāṇa* (*saṃsāranirvāṇāpratiṣṭhitatvāt*), through its being both conditioned and unconditioned (*saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛtatvena*).[18]

According to the Mahāyāna notion of non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, although personally freed from the suffering conditions of the world (*karma* and *kleśa*), does not remain in a

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17 *DDV vṛtti*, sDe dge bi, fol. 38a4-b4.
18 *MSA bhāṣya* 9.14, Levi, p. 36.

quiescence separate from the world. It gives rise to extensive activity throughout the world. Thus, even though the *dharmakāya* is personally free from worldly conditions, its activity on behalf of others must be subject to worldly conditions. Its activity, as mentioned above, is the natural fruition of the method (*upāya*) aspect of the path to enlightenment, the natural expression of eons of bodhisattva activity for living beings prior to the attainment of enlightenment. Because a Buddha's activity operates in the visible world, it requires a means of visible expression. This is the *rūpakāya*, comprising the various bodies of form (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*) which are the *dharmakāya's* manifestations in the world.

The logical implications of the *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa* model take various expressions in the literature. As we carefully delineated in the previous chapter, Buddhahood as *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is a non-dual realization of ultimate reality in which cognitive subject and object are no longer distinguished. The *svābhāvikakāya*, as the final cognitive identification with ultimate reality, is referred to as *tathatāviśuddhi*, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, *anāsravadhātu*, etc. Buddhahood as such is described as "unmoving," (San. "*acalaṃ*," Tib. "*mi gyo ba*"), meaning that it is always cognitively fixed on ultimate reality (*dharmadhātu*, *tathatā*, etc.) which is unconditioned and permanent. Yet it is the source of activities which, like the world in which they manifest, are ever-changing.

*MSA* 9.51 says that a Buddha manifests activities throughout the universe: taking birth, teaching, demonstrating the attainment of

enlightenment, etc., over and over again. It then adds: "He never moves from that place, and yet he carries it all out." The *MSA bhāṣya* identifies "that place" as the *anāsravadhātu*, the undefiled realm (synonymous in the *MSA bhāṣya* with *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* and *tathatāviśuddhi*). Sthiramati explains this to mean that "although [Buddha] does not move, does not budge, does not waver from the *anāsravadhātu*, he carries out all the activities whose characteristic is movement."[19]

The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* says: "In space, there appear the arising and ceasing of diverse forms. Yet space neither arises nor ceases. Likewise, within the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* of the *tathāgatas*, there appear the arising and ceasing of awareness, emanation, and performance of all the activities for sentient beings. Yet the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* has neither arising nor ceasing."[20] The commentary explains: "Forms and so forth, ultimately, are the nature of suchness (*tathatā*). Therefore, [in the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*] there is no arising, etc., though [arising, etc.] is posited conventionally. For that very reason, 'there appear' is the terminology used [in the sūtra], meaning that conventionally there are [arising and ceasing], but ultimately there are not. The emanations of [Buddha's] gnosis and so forth are all like that."[21]

This indicates that a Buddha's gnosis is fixed on ultimate reality (*tathatā*, *dharmadhātu*, etc.) without change. Yet somehow through that, it manifests and acts pervasively within the transactional world of sentient

19 *MSA* 9.51 and *bhāṣya*, Levi p.43. Sthiramati, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fol. 131b3. Cf. *RGV* 2.18-20, Johnson, pp. 82-83, Takasaki, pp. 319-320.
20 *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, Nishio, II.2.4, p.5.
21 *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 71, lines 17-22.

beings. *Dharmadhātuviśuddhi* per se is identified with suchness and the non-dual gnosis of it, the ultimate perspective. But because suchness is the ultimate nature of the entire phenomenal world, the gnosis knowing it pervades the entire world. And because a Buddha's gnosis of suchness is fully perfected, it is transactionally operative within the entire phenomenal world which it pervades. Its activity, then, is simply the form it manifests within the conventional perspective of ordinary beings. Conventionally, in the phenomenal world of beings, its activities "appear"; while ultimately within *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, there is no activity, no change.

The pervasiveness of Buddha's activity, then, is related to the fact that Buddha's gnosis is conjoined with suchness in a non-dual way, where suchness is pervasive, i.e. is the ultimate nature of the entire universe. The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* says: "Because the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* is utterly limitless, within the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* of the *tathāgatas*, in all ten directions, activities individually establishing help and happiness for all sentient beings are utterly limitless. Yet the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* does not come or go, does not move or shift."[22]

In other words, a Buddha's activity is available to each and every being, because his gnosis pervades the entire universe of beings. And his gnosis pervades the entire universe, because it is cognitively conjoined with suchness, the one ultimate nature of everything in the universe. This is expressed in the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* with the notion that the

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22 *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, Nishio, II.2.6, p.6.

*dharmadhātuviśuddhi* pervades all things in "one taste" (*ekarasa*), just as space pervades all forms: "For example, space is omnipresent in all types of varied forms, but neither can it be expressed by them nor is it varied, because it is one taste. Likewise, the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* of the *tathāgatas* is omnipresent in all types of all the varied things to be known. But neither can it be expressed by them nor is it varied, because it is one taste (*ekarasa*)."[23] Asvabhāva's commentary on *Msg* 3.12 expresses a similar idea when it explains that supramundane gnosis (i.e. *nirvikalpajñāna*) perceives all dharmas taught in the Mahāyāna, because all of them share the single nature of suchness (*tathatā*).[24] A related idea appears in *MSA* 9.6, which says: "Buddhahood includes all phenomena,...." which Sthiramati glosses: "Because there is no phenomena which is not included within emptiness, so buddhahood

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23 *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, Nishio, II.2.1, p.4. Cf. Conze, *Large Sutra*, p. 628. Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* has a passage very close in content to this. Like the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, it uses the concept of *ekarasa* in comparing the way Buddha's gnosis knows all things to the way undifferentiated space pervades all forms: "Just as space is not divided by the divisions of containers [which enclose it], so there is no division in reality made by phenomena. Through rightly comprehending with excellent knowledge that [all] is the same in one taste (*ekarasa*), you comprehend all things in one instant." Poussin, *Madhyamakāvatāra*, p.356. A closely related concept in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is that of *ekakṣaṇābhisambodha*, the single moment comprehension of all phenomena. This is the subject matter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* seventh chapter. With the realization of *ekakṣaṇābhisambodha*, all phenomena are known in an instant through knowing their single, ultimate nature, the *dharmadhātu*. Such a gnosis is described by some *AA* commentators as "*ekarasa*," the gnosis of all things in "one taste." See Ruegg, *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism*, pp. 156-158, 161; Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 556-572. Note also *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, Nishio, pp. 21-22, where the gnoses of all bodhisattvas become undifferentiated, one taste (*ekarasa*), upon their entry into the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* of the *tathāgatas*. Cf. *MSA* 9.82-85.

24 *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 146b7.

includes all phenomena."[25] In other words, ontologically, all things are one in their ultimate nature (emptiness, suchness). And therefore epistemologically, a Buddha knows all things through that one nature. A Buddha perceives all things through the one taste (*ekarasa*) which all things share.[26]

But if a Buddha's mind is epistemologically one with the *dharmadhātu* whose content is undifferentiated suchness, it does not conceptualize. Therefore, it does not think conceptually about what it should do to assist beings. Then how can a Buddha act? Although this problem is raised in the Yogācāra commentaries, we get the sense that it is subsumed, at least in part, under buddhahood's inconceivability (*acintyalakṣaṇa*). A full answer would require a detailed analysis of the content and mechanism of a Buddha's awareness. But, as noted in section two above, all texts, invoking the epistemological exclusivity of buddhahood, studiously avoid such an analysis. Instead they address the problem with a very broad, metaphorical discussion.

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[25] *MSA* 9.6, Levi, p.34. *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, 109a3-4 (should be read in conjunction with mi, 108a2-4). The *MSA* expresses this theme more characteristically in its explanation of the four *jñānas* of a Buddha, three of which "move" (operate in the conditioned world) basing themselves on the one which is "unmoving" (which is fixed on the unconditioned *dharmadhātu*). This will be discussed below.

[26] According to the *MSA*, *Msg* and their commentaries, whereas *ārya bodhisattvas* alternate between periods of meditative equipoise on the ultimate (in which they perceive only suchness) and periods of activity (in which they perceive phenomena), Buddhas have the unique ability to perceive the ultimate and the phenomenal simultaneously (since only Buddhas have removed the obstructions to knowledge, *jñeyāvaraṇa*). The passages referred to above suggest one way in which this unique ability of the Buddhas was understood, i.e. that a Buddha perceives all phenomena <u>through</u> his perception of their suchness. Again, the precise mechanism of how a Buddha's gnosis functioned was not speculated upon.

*MSA* vss. 9.18-9.19 use two metaphors to explain Buddha's activity as a spontaneous reflex of the enlightened state. Vs. 9.18 compares Buddha's activity in the world to the sounds which come forth from the heavenly gongs (of Indian legend) which automatically sound without being struck. Vs. 9.19 compares Buddha's activity to a jewel automatically radiating light. In the metaphors, neither the gongs nor the jewel exert any effort or require premeditation for their actions. They perform their functions automatically. Shiramati comments: "Like the [gongs] in the analogy, the *tathāgatas*, dwelling in the undefiled realm (*anāsravadhātu*) carry out the various explanations of dharma for sentient beings, without any premeditated thought, 'I will teach the dharma,' and without any effort or striving on their part. Rather the teaching of the dharma arises in utter spontaneity."[27] In other words, the Buddhas dwell in the unconditioned state of cognitive identification with suchness (referred to in the *MSA* alternatively as "*anāsravadhātu*," "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*," or "*dharmakāya*"), from which arises the activities for beings which are an automatic reflex of that state and the natural result of prior merit.

*Msg* 8.17 says: "Just as the respective functions of jewels and gongs occur without any premeditation, so the various activities of the Buddhas arise, always without any premeditation."[28] The *Msg bhāṣya* and Asvabhāva's commentary say this statement is a response to the following problem: since buddhahood consists of non-conceptual gnosis

27 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 117b7-118a1.
28 *Msg* 8.17, Lamotte, p. 78.

(*nirvikalpajñāna*), how can it carry out activities for sentient beings while itself being free of the conceptualization characteristic of those beings? Asvabhāva comments:

> The analogies of the jewels and the [heavenly] gongs demonstrate how the activity [of buddhahood] is automatic. .... The [jewels and gongs] have no thought process which thinks, "We will radiate," or "We will emit sound." And yet, the wish granting jewel radiates light and the heavenly gongs emit sound without anyone striking them, just by the power of the sentient beings who are born there [i.e. through the force of their own *karma*]. Similarly, even though the Buddhas, the Bhagavans, lack the discursive conceptualization (*vikalpa*) of sentient beings, etc., their various activities arise, helping [beings] in precise accord with the needs of their training.[29]

Such analogies do not prescribe precisely how a Buddha's gnosis can be fixed on universal suchness, free of all conceptual thought, and still give rise to actions to assist sentient beings who operate in a world of their own conceptual construction. Rather the analogies provide the reader with a mental image through which such an ability might be accepted, if not really understood.[30] According to the explanation, the *dharmakāya*, Buddha's pervasive non-conceptual gnosis, is not an intentional agent of activity, since an intentional agent requires discursive thought considering options and intending to do something. Rather,

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29 *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fols. 269a6-b2.

30 The capacity of the *dharmakāya* to give rise to activities appropriate to each sentient being automatically, without any intentional thought, is one of the properties of buddhahood explicitly designated "inconceivable" or "incomprehensible" (*acintya*) in *Ratnagotravibhāga* 1.25 and its commentary. *RGV* 1.25 and *RGVV*, Johnston, pp. 21, 24, Takasaki, pp. 188, 192-4.

intransitive verbs are used to express the passivity and automatic nature of the *dharmakāya's* actions. The actions "arise" or "come forth" (*'byung ba, sambhava*) in dependence on the various karmic capacities and conditions of sentient beings. In accord with the individual *karma* of different beings (the cognitive propensities left by their own previous actions), the *dharmakāya* naturally and automatically gives rise to activities appropriate to the spiritual training of each. Somehow, the *dharmakāya* is the basis of automatic activity in the conditioned world of beings, while free of the discursive, conceptual thought which drives those beings.[31]

*RGV* chapter 4 and its commentary provide nine analogies as metaphorical explanation for the activities of buddhahood (Johnston, pp. 98-114, Takasaki, pp. 351-379). Two of those analogies are the same as those above: the wish granting jewel and the heavenly gongs which sound without being struck. The *RGV's* explanation of Buddha's activities describes their lack of premeditation and automaticity, and emphasizes the fact that the activities occur as reflections within the minds of sentient beings, in accord with their own cognitive capacities (*RGV* 4.25: "*svacittapratibhāso 'yamiti naivaṃ pṛthagjanāḥ/ jānantyatha ca tatteṣāmavandhyaṃ bimbadarśanam//.*" "Ordinary beings do not know that it [the Buddha's form] is just an appearance within their own minds,

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31 Cf. *MSA* 9.52 on Buddha's activity as automatic, free of premeditation. Cf. *Buddhabhūmisūtra* and *vyākhyāna*, II. 3, Nishio, pp. 5, 68-70 where the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi's* unpremeditated activity in the world is compared to the activities of beings which arise in space without premeditation on space's part. Cf. *RGV* 1.6 and commentary, Johnson, p. 8, where buddhahood is described as spontaneous (*anābhoga*) because it is free of discursive proliferation (*prapañca*) and conceptualization (*vikalpa*).

but their seeing of the [Buddha's] reflection is purposeful for them."). The forms which carry out the *dharmakāya's* activities (the *rūpakāyas)* are reflections of the *dharmakāya* within the cognitive world of sentient beings. The *dharmakāya*, itself non-conceptual, is refracted through the conceptual cognitions of sentient beings to manifest as the *rūpakāyas*.[32]

*RGV* 1.145 and its commentary describe the *dharmakāya* in two aspects: 1. the perfect purity of the *dharmadhātu*, the sphere of non-conceptual gnosis, i.e. the personal realization of a Buddha (*pratyātmādhigama dharma*), and 2. its natural outflow (*suviśuddhadharmadhātu niṣyandaḥ*), the source of cognitive appearances (*vijñapti*) among sentient beings which accord with the needs of their spiritual training, i.e. the *dharma* as it is communicated to sentient beings (*deśanā dharma*).[33] The first aspect corresponds to the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *dharmakāya* as it is personally realized by a Buddha. The second aspect is the natural outflow (*niṣyandaḥ*) of the *dharmakāya*. This corresponds to the *rūpakāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*) which are the modes under which the *dharmakāya* appears to sentient beings as they receive its teaching. According to this model, the need to

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32 What, if any, school of Buddhism the *RGV* is to be included within remains controversial. Some scholars have classified it as Yogācāra, some as Madhyamaka, and others see it as an expression of an independent *tathāgatagarbha* school of some kind (Ruegg, *La Theorie*, introduction, pp. 31-70). All can agree, I think, that many of the seminal ideas which fed into the Yogācāra tradition also contributed to the *RGV's* theory of *tathāgatagarbha* (e.g. *cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*, *nirmalā tathatā*, *gotra*, the six category analysis of buddhahood, *āśrayaparivṛtti*, the three *kāyas*). To exclude the *RGV* from the present discussion on the grounds that its school is anomalous would be a mistake, since its buddhology is obviously closely related to that of the *MSA*, from whose ninth chapter on *bodhi* it quotes (Takasaki, pp. 40 ff.).

33 *RGV* 1.145 and *RGVV*, Johnston, pp.70-71, Takasaki, pp. 284-6.

distinguish the *dharmakāya* as it is personally realized from the *dharmakāya's* automatic outflow of activity in the world is the raison d'etre for distinguishing *dharmakāya* as *svābhāvikakāya* from the *rūpakāyas*.[34]

Thusfar we have traced several implications of the *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa* model of buddhahood as they find expression with respect to the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) and the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*). Buddhahood, cognitively fixed on ultimate reality (*dharmadhātu*, *tathatā*, etc.), is described as unconditioned, permanent, and unmoving (*acalaṃ*). This corresponds to the *svābhāvikakāya* which is the *dharmakāya* as it is personally realized (*pratyātmavedita*). Buddhahood is also the basis of pervasive, spontaneous activity throughout the world, appropriate to each sentient being. This corresponds to the *rūpakāyas*, which are the *dharmakāya* as it automatically manifests in the conditioned world of sentient beings to teach and assist them.

The concept of *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*, then, requires that buddhahood reconcile within itself unconditioned and conditioned aspects. The unconditioned part of buddhahood is its unchanging realization of ultimate reality and its permanent elimination of moral and cognitive obstructions. The conditioned part of buddhahood is its compassionate activity in a conditioned world. This entails that buddhahood reconcile

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[34] Cf. Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.62, explaining the *sāmbhogikakāya* as the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the *svābhāvikakāya* (sDe dge mi, fol. 136b6-7). See also *Laṅkāvatarasūtra*, chapter 15 on Buddha as *dharmatā* (corresponding to the *dharmakāya/svābhāvikakāya* of the Yogācāra śāstras), Buddha as *niṣyanda* (corresponding to *sāmbhogikakāya*) and Buddha as *nirmāṇa* (corresponding to *nairmāṇikakāya*), Suzuki, p.51.

the duality of the unconditioned and the conditioned with respect to a whole set of dichotomies, where the first term of each dichotomous pair corresponds to the unconditioned, the second to the conditioned: *svābhāvikakāya* and *rūpakāya*, ultimate reality (suchness, emptiness) and phenomenal reality, unmanifest and manifest, formlessness and form, the permanent and the impermanent, support and supported, the pervasive and the delimited.

Still, the precise mechanism whereby buddhahood reconciles within itself the unconditioned with the conditioned, gnosis of ultimate reality with phenomenal activity, etc. is left unspecified except for the metaphors and broad discussions of the sort given above. The Yogācāra texts are not embarrassed by their inability to present a more detailed answer. As we have seen, they clearly state that buddhahood, being beyond ordinary linguistic and conceptual categories, can not be specified more precisely. With that understanding, the apparent contradictoriness of the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, though unconditioned, being the source of conditioned activity in the world, is even singled out as a further indication of a Buddha's greatness. In fact, its antinomic character sets it apart as an exalted quality of buddhahood. The fact that the *dharmakāya* can include and reconcile within itself two apparently contradictory properties, which would be impossible for any lesser being to reconcile, is taken as a further indication of its profundity.[35]

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[35] *Msg* 10.3.3.b, Lamotte p.84. Besides the non-duality of being conditioned and unconditioned, *Msg* 10.3.3 lists two other ways in which the *dharmakāya* is understood to reconcile apparent opposites in its character of non-duality: its non-duality of being and non-being (*bhāvābhāvādvayalakṣaṇa*) and its non-duality of plurality and oneness

4. Buddha's Gnosis: Inseparable from Unconditioned Suchness, Yet Operative in the Conditioned World

Buddhahood's transcendance of the duality of unconditioned and conditioned had to find expression in Mahāyāna discussions of a Buddha's gnosis, since, as we have seen, it is a Buddha's non-dual gnosis which is the essence of enlightenment, upon which all other enlightened qualities are based. As noted above, a Buddha's gnosis never wavers from ultimate reality, the undifferentiated *dharmadhātu*. Being quintessentially a non-dual realization of universal suchness, a Buddha's gnosis is identified with the unconditioned nature of suchness. Yet it is said to be operative in the cognitive world of sentient beings, manifesting various forms (*rūpakāyas*) to teach and help them. As such, it must also be subject in some way to the cognitive conditions of the world. This raises a fundamental problem: how can a Buddha remain in permanent meditative equipoise on undifferentiated, ultimate reality (*paramārtha satya*) while also cognizant of the differentiated phenomenal world (*saṃvṛti satya*) so as to be compassionately active within it? Again, the texts to which we have been referring do not specify precisely how this can be so.

Rather, they present broad descriptions of a Buddha's gnosis, in which its relation to the unconditioned and the conditioned parallels other buddhological dichotomies: *svābhāvikakāya* and *rūpakāyas*, the unmoving (*acala*) and the moving (*cala*), the support (*āśraya*) and the supported

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(*nānātvaikatvādvayalakṣaṇa*). Such qualities of the *dharmakāya* are all the more exalted for their apparent contradictoriness.

(*āśrita*), ultimate reality (*paramārtha satya*) and conventional reality (*saṃvṛti satya*). The descriptions of Buddha's gnosis show it to transcend the duality of the unconditioned and the conditioned, thereby providing a broad rationale for all the ways a Buddha transcends that duality. But again, if the reader hopes to find a precise description of the mechanism whereby a Buddha simultaneously cognizes ultimate and conventional reality, she will be disappointed, since the precise mechanism of a Buddha's awareness was held to be inconceivable, beyond extrapolation from ordinary epistemological categories and beyond precise description in language.

According to Yogācāra descriptions of *ārya bodhisattva* practise (*ārya bodhisattvas* being those who have directly realized suchness), the practitioner alternates between periods of single-pointed meditation on suchness, which contributes to his accumulation of gnosis (*jñānasambhāra*), and periods of altruistic activity, which contributes to his accumulation of merit (*puṇyasambhāra*). The gnosis which non-dualistically realizes suchness is referred to as "non-conceptual gnosis," "*nirvikalpajñāna*." During periods of altruistic activity subsequent to meditation sessions, the cognitions of the practitioner are fundamentally altered by the non-conceptual gnosis realized during the meditation session. Whereas during the session he perceived nothing but suchness, in the period following the session he again sees the world of dualistic appearances. But whereas ordinary beings adhere to that dualism, the practitioner no longer feels such adherence. The force of the non-conceptual gnosis from his prior meditation session makes all dualistic

appearances appear as illusions or dreams. The apparent independence and separateness of cognitive subject and object seem as unreal to the yogi as a magician's illusion. This kind of cognition, which, following from the force of non-conceptual gnosis during prior meditation, sees phenomena as an illusion or dream, is referred to as "*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*," "subsequent gnosis," i.e. gnosis subsequent to non-conceptual gnosis. Whereas non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) perceives emptiness or suchness, i.e. ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*), the gnosis subsequent to it (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*) perceives the phenomenal world, conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*), as an illusion. On the bodhisattva path prior to the attainment of buddhahood, the practitioner alternates between non-conceptual gnosis, *nirvikalpajñāna* (during meditation sessions) and subsequent gnosis, *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* (after meditation sessions). In short, the practitioner's subsequent gnosis (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*) is precisely his perception of the phenomenal world as it is effected by his prior realization of non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*).[36]

Unlike the bodhisattva who alternates between periods of single-pointed meditation on suchness and periods of activity in the world, a Buddha never leaves his "meditation session" on suchness. As we noted in the previous chapter, the fact that a Buddha has attained a permanent non-dual realization of suchness is the mark of his having attained full enlightenment. That realization, in fact, comprises the *svābhāvikakāya*, which is described as unconditioned and eternal by nature. A Buddha's

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[36] *Msg* 3.11-3.12, 4.9.6, 5.5.4, 8.8, 8.14-8.16 with commentaries, Lamotte pp. 53-4, 63, 67, 76-8; *MSA* 9.12, 11.31-33, 14.42-49, 16.41, 19.52 with commentaries.

non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) realizing suchness never ceases. That means it is impossible for a Buddha to have a second type of gnosis (like the *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* of the bodhisattva) which would arise after non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) per se has ceased.

Does this mean that a Buddha possesses only *nirvikalpajñāna* and not *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*? No. The texts still explicitly ascribe both *jñānas* to a Buddha.[37] But in the case of a bodhisattva, *nirvikalpajñāna* and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* are two gnoses, only one of which is operative at one time. While in the case of a Buddha, *nirvikalpajñāna* and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* must become two aspects of a single gnosis (since *nirvikalpajñāna* per se never ceases). At the bodhisattva stage, *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* perceiving phenomena as illusory is produced by and temporally follows upon *nirvikalpajñāna*. But when the stage of buddhahood is attained, through the complete elimination of all cognitive obstructions (*jñeyāvaraṇaprahāṇa*), what had been the bodhisattva's *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* now becomes a capacity of Buddha's *nirvikalpajñāna* to cognize and operate within the phenomenal world. The elimination of all cognitive obstructions gives a Buddha the unique capacity to realize suchness directly and unceasingly (*nirvikalpajñāna*) while simultaneously cognizing and operating within the phenomenal world (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*).

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[37] *Msg* 10.28.10 and commentaries (read in conjunction with *Msg* chapter 8); *MSA* 9.56 and *bhāṣya*; Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.62; *DDV* 9.6.4 and 9.6.6.4, Davidson, pp. 290-91; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio p. 125; *RGV* 1.93, 2.7-8, 2.10-11, 2.18-20 with *vyākhyāna*. The statements of this and the following paragraph are based on these passages and the relevant portions of the previous section of this chapter.

For the bodhisattva prior to his attainment of buddhahood, then, "*nirvikalpajñāna*" ("non-conceptual gnosis") and "*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*" ("subsequent gnosis") designate two types of gnosis. But after attaining buddhahood, they designate two capacities of a single gnosis. A Buddha's gnosis is called "*nirvikalpajñāna*" insofar as it non-dually realizes suchness. It is called "*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*" insofar as it cognizes and is transactionally operative within the phenomenal world. In the previous section of this chapter, we noted that the pervasiveness of a Buddha's activity was related to the fact that his gnosis is conjoined with suchness, where suchness pervades the entire universe as its ultimate nature. Ontologically all things are one in their ultimate nature (suchness). And therefore epistemologically, a Buddha (having removed all his cognitive obstructions) knows all things through that one ultimate nature, perceives all things through the one taste (*ekarasa*) which they share. The Buddha's perception of the one ultimate nature is his *nirvikalpajñāna*. His knowing of all things through that perception is his *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*.

The latter perception, then, is based on the former perception, just as the *rūpakāyas* were said to be based upon the *svābhāvikakāya* (*MSA* 9.60 quoted in section 2 above). *Nirvikalpajñāna* is a Buddha's gnosis of unconditioned suchness. *Pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* is the way a Buddha cognizes the conditioned world based on his cognition of suchness. For a Buddha, a single gnosis is distinguished as *nirvikalpajñāna* and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* with reference to its perception of the unconditioned (*paramārtha satya*) and the conditioned (*saṃvṛti satya*). As might be expected, then, our textual sources draw a correspondence between

*nirvikalpajñāna* and *svābhāvikakāya* (identified earlier as the unconditioned *kāya*) and also a correspondence between *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* and the *rūpakāyas* (the *kāyas* based on the *svābhāvikakāya* which manifest in the world subject to its conditions).

*Msg* 10.28.10, discussing the profundity of the *dharmakāya*, says: "They [the Buddhas] examine all, without examining anything at all. They appear every place, yet are not objects of the six senses."[38] Asvabhāva comments that the *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* of the *dharmakāya* examines every knowable thing in existence. Yet, at the same time, the *dharmakāya* is said to examine nothing at all, because as *nirvikalpajñāna*, it is free of discrimination (*vicārarahita*) (again, precisely how the *dharmakāya's* awareness knows each separate thing conventionally while ultimately knowing only indivisible suchness is not explained). Asvabhāva says the *Msg* phrase "they appear every place" refers to the *nairmāṇikakāya* which manifests everywhere. He says the statement "yet [they] are not objects of the six senses" means that ultimately the Buddhas are *dharmakāya*, which is not cognizable to sentient beings whose cognition is restricted to the objects of the sense organs. In this account, *nirvikalpajñāna* and *dharmakāya* are the realization of ultimate reality (*paramārtha satya*), the unconditioned, while *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are the *dharmakāya's* cognitive and transactional relation to the conditioned world.[39]

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38 *Msg* 10.28.10, Lamotte, p. 92.
39 Asvabhāva, *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 288b4-7.

*MSA* 9.62 says that the *svābhāvikakāya* is connected with the *sāmbhogikakāya*, since it is the "cause of mastery over shared enjoyment" (*saṃbhoga*).[40] Sthiramati comments:

> How is the [*svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*] the cause of the [*sāmbhogikakāya*]? The *sāmbhogikakāya* arises as the natural outflow (*niṣyanda*) of the *dharmakāya* to share the enjoyment of the unique, Mahāyāna dharma with the bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* who have entered the *bhūmis*. Or, put another way, the *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, the pure worldly gnosis, is referred to as "*sāmbhogikakāya*." Since the pure worldly gnosis [the *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*] emerges from the *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis), the *dharmakāya* is said to be connected with the [*sāmbhogikakāya*].[41]

Here, the *sāmbhogikakāya* as a manifestation of the *svābhāvikakāya* (=*dharmakāya*) is explicitly equated with the *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* as *nirvikalpajñāna's* (*svābhāvikakāya's*) interaction with the phenomenal world.

The *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* makes a similar analysis. It identifies the *sāmbhogikakāya* as *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* which arises from the *nirvikalpajñāna* of the *svābhāvikakāya*. The *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, as *sāmbhogikakāya*, is the cause of sharing a Buddha's enjoyment of *dharma* with bodhisattvas on the *bhūmis*. But *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* is identified not only with the *sāmbhogikakāya*, but also with all of a Buddha's varied

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40 *MSA* 9.62 with *bhāṣya*, Levi p. 45.

41 Sthiramati's *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 136b6-137a1. Cf. Ratnakīrti's commentary on *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, Pk #5197, Vol. 91, fol. 183-2-7, in which he associates the 21 sets of undefiled *buddhadharmas* with the *sāmbhogikakāya*. Most of the *buddhadharmas*, as aspects of Buddha's mind cognizant of phenomena, would correspond to *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*.

emanations throughout the universe to help sentient beings, i.e. the *nairmāṇikakāya*.[42] In the *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, then, *nirvikalpajñāna* again corresponds to *svābhāvikakāya*; while *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* is identified with both *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*.

*MSA* vss. 14.42-49 describe the practises of the path of meditation (*bhāvanā mārga*) which culminate in buddhahood as fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*). Identified as principal among the practises is the cultivation of the two types of gnosis, *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis realizing suchness) and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* (subsequent gnosis perceiving phenomena as illusory). The former is said to perfect the bodhisattva's own qualities of buddhahood, while the latter is said to bring about the spiritual development of other beings. *Nirvikalpajñāna*, then, is identified as the cause of enlightenment per se, while *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* is identified as the cause of enlightenment's manifestation to help others.[43] This comprises an analysis of the causal level as it gives rise to different aspects of enlightenment, the result. Its implication is that *nirvikalpajñāna* becomes enlightenment per se, i.e. the *svābhāvikakāya*, while *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* gives rise to the *rūpakāyas*, the manifestation of enlightenment to others.

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* echoes this analysis in its second and third chapters on buddhahood and its qualities. *RGV* vss. 3.1-3 and 3.37-38 identify the "*paramārthakāya*" ("ultimate *kāya*") as "one's own purpose" (*svārtha*) which is the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, and the "*saṃvṛtikāya*"

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42 *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 125, lines 19-27.
43 *MSA* 14.42-49 with *bhāṣya*, Levi, p.96.

("conventional *kāya*") as the "purpose of others" (*parārtha*) which is the *rūpakāyas*. *RGV's* second chapter identifies *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis) and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* (subsequent gnosis) as the primary causes of buddhahood. These give rise to buddhahood per se and buddhahood in its manifestation to others respectively (*RGV* vss. 2.8, 2.10-11). The attainment of buddhahood per se, the result of *nirvikalpajñāna*, is the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, which fulfills one's own purpose. The manifestation of buddhahood to assist other beings, the result of *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, is the two *rūpakāyas*, which fulfill the purpose of others (*RGV vyākhyāna* introductory to *RGV* vss. 2.18-20). Here, correspondences are explicitly drawn between *nirvikalpajñāna, svābhāvikakāya,* one's own purpose, and *paramārtha* (the ultimate) on the one hand, and between *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, the two *rūpakāyas*, others' benefit, and *saṃvṛti* (the conventional or phenomenal) on the other.[44]

A different but equally important theory of Buddha's gnosis in early Yogācāra texts, particularly the *MSA*, the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* and their commentaries, is the theory of the four Buddha gnoses (*jñānas*). The reader should not be misled by the plural form "gnoses," because like *nirvikalpajñāna* and *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*, the four "gnoses" were not understood as temporally distinct gnoses, but rather as four capacities of a Buddha's single gnosis. The first is mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*), which is described as unmoving (*acalaṃ*). The other three are the gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*), the gnosis which examines (*pratyavekṣājñāna*),

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[44] *RGV* and *vyākhyāna*, vss. 2.8, 2.10-11, 2.18-20, 3.1-3, 3. 37-38, Johnston pp. 81-3, 91,97.

and the gnosis which accomplishes activities (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*). These three are said to be based upon the mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*). And while mirror gnosis is described as "unmoving," the latter three are said to be "moving" (*cala*).[45]

According to both Sthiramati and Śīlabhadra (author of the *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*), the mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*) is described as fixed or unmoving because it is always cognitively fixed on the *dharmadhātu*, universal suchness. This makes it equivalent to *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis), and Sthiramati explicitly identifies it as such. The other three gnoses, as "moving," correspond to different aspects of *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*. They "move" in that they are cognizant of and operative within the conditioned world of changing phenomena. A cognition of an impermanent object can not begin until the object comes into existence, and must cease when the object ceases. Mirror gnosis, once achieved, never changes since it is fixed on universal suchness, an object which never changes. But the other three gnoses, being cognizant of a changing world, shift with it.[46]

The qualities ascribed to the four Buddha gnoses in *MSA* 9.67-9.76 have correspondance to those of the three *kāyas*, and the commentators make the correspondences even more explicit. We noted in the previous section the statement in *MSA* 9.51: "He [a Buddha] never moves from that place, and yet he carries it all out." The unmoving aspect of

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45 *MSA* 9.67 and *bhāṣya*, Levi, p. 46.

46 Sthiramati, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 138b6-139b7; Śīlabhadra, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 85.

buddhahood is its non-dual cognition of suchness, i.e. the *svābhāvikakāya* (which includes *nirvikalpajñāna* = *ādarśajñāna*) while the aspects of buddhahood which "carry it all out" (carry out all Buddha's activities in the world) are the *rūpakāyas* and the "moving" gnoses associated with them (*samatājñāna*, *pratyavekṣājñāna*, *kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*). And just as the *svābhāvikakāya* is said to be the basis of the *rūpakāyas* (*MSA* 9.60, 9.65), the mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*) is said to be the fundamental gnosis upon which all others are based (*MSA* 9.67, 9.69).

Sthiramati says the mirror gnosis is *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis), which perceives everything as the same because it perceives all phenomena through its perception of the *dharmadhātu*, universal suchness. According to this account, mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*), by directly perceiving the suchness of all phenomena, also non-judgementally perceives the phenomena whose suchness it is, like a clear mirror reflects what is put before it.[47] The other three gnoses, then, comprise different aspects of a Buddha's perception of phenomena, all of which derive from the mirror gnosis's perception of their suchness.[48] Just as the *rūpakāyas* are reflections of the *svābhāvikakāya* in the conceptually constructed

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47 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fol. 139b5-7. Cf. *Buddhabhūmisūtra* II.3.5-6, Nishio pp. 9-10; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio pp. 89-92; Davidson, p. 315. Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.60 (sDe dge mi, fol. 135b6) while identifying *adarśajñāna* with*dharmakāya*,, refers to *adarśajñāna* as "*dharmadhātvadarśajñāna*," a term which specifies *adarśajñāna* 's two functions of 1. non-dually knowing the *dharmadhātu* and through that, 2. non-judgementally reflecting all phenomena which are pervaded by the *dharmadhātu*. Later Indian Buddhism separated these two functions into two gnoses (*jñānas*): *dharmadhātuviśuddhijñāna* and *adarśajñāna*, making five gnoses in all (as in Tantra). On this, see also Abhayākaragupta, *Munimatā—aṃkāra* sDe dge a, fol. 222a1.

48 *MSA* 9.67-69 and *bhāṣya*, Levi, p. 46; Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.67-69, *bhāṣya* sDe dge mi, fols. 138b2-140a7.

world of sentient beings, so the latter three gnoses comprise aspects of the mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*) as it is cognitively and transactionally related to the phenomenal world. In line with this parallelism, the commentators explicitly identify *ādarśajñāna* as *svābhāvikakāya* (= *dharmakāya*).[49]

The gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*, *MSA* 9.70-71) perceives all phenomena while cognizant of their sameness in their ultimate nature of suchness or emptiness. According to the text and commentaries, the gnosis of equality is focussed particularly on the essential sameness of all other beings and oneself. When the bodhisattva first gains direct realization of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) on the first *bhūmi* (*darśana mārga*), he gains the gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*), because through his perception of emptiness, he realizes that on the ultimate level there is no difference whatsoever between himself and all others. Based on that perception, what had heretofore been concern for himself becomes a profound concern for all others. When this gnosis is fully perfected through his meditation on emptiness on the rest of the *bhūmis*, it becomes a Buddha's gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*) which totally identifies with the needs and sufferings of sentient beings, and therefore feels love and compassion for them.[50] This love and compassion finds expression

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[49] Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.60, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 135b6. Śīlabhadra, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio p. 59.

[50] Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.70-71, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 140b1-141a4. Cf. *MSA* 14.30-31 and *bhāṣya*, Levi, p. 94. The way in which realization of emptiness is understood in Mahāyāna Buddhism to give rise to compassion for others, and compassion for others is understood to empower one's capacity to realize emptiness, is extremely profound. It deserves careful study and thought far beyond what I have been able to devote to it here.

through a Buddha's manifestation of forms which appear to sentient beings according to their capacities.

The examining gnosis (*pratyavekṣājñāna*, *MSA* 9.72-73) knows all the specific and general characteristics of phenomena, and in particular, all the aspects of what must be taught to sentient beings for their spiritual development. This, together with the gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*), is identified in the commentaries with the *sāmbhogikakāya*. As aspects of a Buddha's gnosis, they are called "*pratyavekṣājñāna*" and "*samatājñāna*." As the form which appears to bodhisattvas on the *bhūmis*, they are said to manifest as "*sāmbhogikakāya*."[51]

The gnosis which accomplishes activities (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*, *MSA* 9.74-75) is the aspect of a Buddha's gnosis which is actively engaged in working for sentient beings throughout the universe. It does this by manifesting all different kinds of forms, appearing as any sort of sentient being which would be appropriate for any particular set of circumstances, place or time, in accord with the mentalities (*karma*) of the beings to be taught. This aspect of a Buddha's gnosis manifests as limitless emanations throughout the universe, one of which is identified as the historical Śākyamuni Buddha, most of which ordinary beings do not recognize as manifestations of Buddha. As such, *kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna* is identified by commentators with the *nairmāṇikakāya*.[52]

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51 Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.60, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols.135b7-136a1; Śīlabhadra, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 59.
52 Sthiramati on *MSA* 9.60, *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fol. 136a1-2; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 59.

This identification of the four Buddha *jñānas* with the three *kāyas* (*ādarśajñāna = svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, *samatājñāna* and *pratyavekṣājñāna = sāmbhogikakāya*, *kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna = nairmāṇikakāya*) became popular in Mahāyāna literature. It is found in germinal form in the *MSA* and made explicit in Sthiramati's commentary on the *MSA* and Śīlabhadra's commentary on the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* as noted above. It also occurs in the *Kāyatrayasūtra* (Pk 949, Vol. 37, 108.3.4-6), Buddhajñānapāda's commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (*Saṃcayagāthāpañjikā*, Pk 5196, Vol. 91, 152.5.7-153.1.4), Atiśa's brief commentary on the *AA* (*Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārthapradīpa*, Pk 5201, Vol. 92, 106.5.1-2), and a text ascribed to Candragomin which is quoted by Tsong kha pa in his commentary on the *AA* (*Legs bshad gser phreng*, fols. 230a4-b2).

In line with this is the *MSA's* descriptions of the functions of the four Buddha *jñānas*. Mirror gnosis is the only one of the four which is described primarily in terms of its cognitive functions. When describing the other three gnoses the *MSA* seems to put greater emphasis on their modes of manifestation in the world and work for sentient beings than on their specific cognitive functions. The mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*) is described as free of dualistic conceptual construction, spatially and temporally limitless in its cognition, and knowing all phenomena without adhering to them through its cognition of universal suchness (*MSA* 9.69 and Sthiramati's commentary). The commentaries identify this gnosis with *svābhāvikakāya* (or *dharmakāya*). The gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*) manifests an image of the Buddha for beings which

accords with their faith (*MSA* 9.71). The examining gnosis (*pratyavekṣājñāna*) shows its powers in the circle of assemblies (*MSA* 9.73). The commentaries identify these gnoses with the *sāmbhogikakāya*, taking the "circles of assemblies" to be the *ārya bodhisattvas*. The gnosis which accomplishes activities (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*) works for all beings through limitless types of emanations. The commentaries identify this with *nairmāṇikakāya*.

One gets the impression from the *MSA* and its commentaries that the mirror gnosis is Buddha's real cognition, a non-dual cognition of universal suchness through which, somehow (again not specified), all phenomena are perfectly known. The other three gnoses, cognitively, are merely aspects of the fundamental mirror gnosis (*MSA* 9.67, 9.69). In their descriptions, therefore, the emphasis is not so much on their modes of cognition as on the forms they manifest within the world to help beings (*MSA* 9.70-9.75). This, again, accords with the logic of the three *kāyas*, where the first *kāya* is simply buddhahood in its essence, the fundamental non-dual cognition of suchness, while the other two *kāyas* are the manifestations of that cognitive essence within the conceptually constructed world of sentient beings in accord with their mentalities.

In the previous chapter we delineated how the very essence of buddhahood was the non-dual gnosis of universal suchness identified as *svābhāvikakāya*. We also noted there and in this chapter that all the other qualities and manifestations attributed to buddhahood represent reflections of that essence within the cognitive world of sentient beings. The essence of buddhahood itself represents the unconditioned state, which is no

longer subject to worldly conditions. But its manifestations within the cognitive world of sentient beings are subject to worldly conditions, and therefore their appearance, and disappearance, conform to the mentalities of those beings. The Yogācāra analyses of a Buddha's gnosis also conform to this fundamental structure. The fundamental gnosis, whether referred to as *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis) or *adarśajñāna* (mirror gnosis) is the realization of universal suchness, which is the attainment of the unconditioned state, and through which a Buddha's cognition of all phenomena is made possible. The aspects of that fundamental gnosis which cognize and operate within the world to help other beings are conditioned by the world.

The important point to note here is that the various qualities ascribed to a Buddha from a phenomenal point-of-view, whether expressed in terms of different types of gnosis, different bodies of form (*rūpakāyas*), or a set of undefiled Buddha dharmas, were all understood to derive from buddhahood's one ultimate essence. And that one ultimate essence was referred to as *svābhāvikakāya* (the body in its essence), *dharmakāya* (the body of *dharma*), *nirvikalpajñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis), *tathatāviśuddhi* (purified suchness), *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* (the purity of the dharma realm), and *anāsravadhātu* (the undefiled realm), all of which were understood to be ontologically equivalent. This means that throughout the entire literature in which the three *kāyas* were first delineated, *svābhāvikakāya* (or its ontological equivalent) was understood as the basis and ontological ground of all aspects of buddhahood. The undefiled *buddhadharmas*, various conventional gnoses, *rūpakāyas*, etc, as

phenomenal aspects of buddhahood, do not comprise its essence. Rather, they all derive from that essence, which is the *svābhāvikakāya*, as it stands in relation to the phenomenal world.

5. Adjunct Remarks on Sāmbhogikakāya and Nairmāṇikakāya

In chapter 4, section 2 above, we noted that the Mahāyāna *sūtras* contain physical descriptions of Buddhas which far exceed what is found in the Pali canon.[53] These descriptions break down into two basic types: 1. descriptions of a glorified Buddha form appearing in an exalted pure realm, surrounded by a retinue of numerous beings, foremost among whom are great bodhisattvas who receive from the Buddha the Mahāyāna teaching contained in the sūtra, 2. limitless emanations of innumerable types of forms which pervade the universe, assisting beings of all kinds and teaching them the dharma by taking the form most suitable to their own mentalities (including forms of animals, various spirits, various gods, etc.). The Mahāyāna commentaries we have been discussing, in first formalizing the theory of three *kāyas*, distinguished these two basic types of descriptions, thereby dividing into two types what had previously been referred to in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* simply as "*rūpakāya*" (body of form). They identified the first type of Buddha form as the "*sāmbhogikakāya*," "the body in its shared enjoyment," which could

[53] See chapter 4, footnote 6 above.

appear only to saints (*ārya bodhisattvas*) who had purified their minds sufficiently through their realization of suchness to see such a form. The latter type of Buddha form, the infinite emanations, was identified as "*nairmāṇikakāya*," "the body as emanation." This could appear to anyone, no matter how lowly, in dependence upon the karmic condition of his or her individual mind.

Because the exalted form identified as *sāmbhogikakāya* was described in the Mahāyāna sūtras in terms of its blissful sharing of spiritual truths (dharma) with its retinue of bodhisattvas, it was characterized particularly in terms of its *sambhoga*, "enjoyment" or "bliss," from which was derived its name. When our earliest commentarial sources describe the *sāmbhogikakāya*, they do not describe it only in terms of its own experience of enjoyment, but rather in terms of its sharing its enjoyment of spiritual truth (dharma) with its retinue of listeners. Again *MSA* 9.60 and *bhāṣya* are fundamental to the commentaries which followed it:

> *svābhāviko 'tha sāṃbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko 'paraḥ/*
> *kāyabhedā hi buddhānām prathamastu dvayāśrayaḥ/* *MSA* 9.60
>
> Thus the divisions of the body of the Buddhas are: the body in its essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation. But the first is the basis of the [other] two//
>
> *trividhaḥ kāyo buddhānām/ svābhāviko dharmakāya āśrayaparāvṛttilakṣaṇaḥ/ sāṃbhogiko yena parṣanmaṇḍaleṣu dharmasaṃbhogaṃ karoti/ nairmāṇiko yena nirmāṇena sattvārthaṃ karoti/* *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*
>
> The body of the Buddhas is threefold, [being]: 1. In essence (*svābhāvika*), the *dharmakāya*, whose characteristic is fundamental transformation. 2. in shared enjoyment

(*sāṃbhogika*), that through which it brings enjoyment of dharma to the circles of assembly. 3. as emanation (*nairmāṇika*), the emanation through which it works for the benefit of beings.

Here we see *sāmbhogikakāya* defined as that which "brings enjoyment of dharma to the circles of assembly," not that which simply enjoys the dharma for itself. The same basic definition, involving an enjoyment of dharma which Buddha shares with his retinue, appears throughout the commentarial literature which followed the *MSA*.[54]

The Sanskrit term "*bhoga*" generally means "enjoyment." However, I have not seen previous discussions in modern scholarship on the semantic purpose of the prefix "*saṃ-*" added to "*bhoga*" to construct the name "*sāmbhogikakāya*." Tibetan translators rendered "*sāmbhogikakāya*" by "*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*," where "*longs spyod*," meant "*bhogika*," "enjoyment," "*sku*" meant "*kāya*," body, and "*rdzogs pa*" stood for the prefix "*sam-*." In Tibetan, the term "*rdzogs pa*" means "complete," "finished," etc. But the Sanskrit prefix "*sam-*" carries the primary meaning "with" or "together with," and connotes completeness only in a derivative sense.[55] Since the most popular etymological definition of the term "*sāmbhogikakāya*" in the earliest relevant literature stresses that *sāmbhogikakāya* is that which enjoys spiritual truth <u>together with</u> a retinue, I would propose that the Tibetan "*rdzogs pa*," meaning "complete," is a mistranslation of the Sanskrit prefix "*sam-*," which more

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54 *Vṛttibhāṣya* sDe dge mi, 135b7-136a1; *Msg* 10.1.2 with Asvabhāva's commentary; *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna* (Nishio p. 125); *RGV* 2.49. Cf. Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary, Pk 5185, Vol. 88, fol. 96.2.6-7.
55 Monier-Williams, p. 1152.

likely means "together with." The term "*sāmbhogikakāya*" then, literally translates into English as: "the body in its together-with-enjoyment," which would be rendered something like: "the body in its shared enjoyment," or "the shared enjoyment body." This is how I have been translating it here.

One way of defining the *sāmbhogikakāya* which became very widespread in medieval Tibet was in terms of "five definites" (*nges pa lnga*). Bu ston, a fourteenth century Tibetan scholar, presented them as follows: 1. definite place - A *sāmbhogikakāya* manifests only in the pure realm known as "Akaniṣṭha" (Bu ston quotes the *Lankāvatāra sūtra* to support this. Other Tibetan commentators did the same, also quoting Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*). 2. definite form - possessing the thirty-two marks and eighty signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*, a great being. 3. definite retinue - Bu ston identifies this as bodhisattvas of the tenth *bhūmi*; other commentators identify the "definite" retinue as bodhisattvas from the first *bhūmi* up to the tenth. 4. definite type of dharma enjoyed - Mahāyāna teaching alone. 5. definite duration - lasting eternally, or until the end of saṃsāra.[56]

This compilation of five "definite" characteristics for the *sāmbhogikakāya* is unknown in the early and classical Yogācāra related literature to which we have been referring. The first list of definite characteristics for the *sāmbhogikakāya* that I am aware of in Indian literature appears in Atiśa's condensed commentary on the

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[56] Bu ston, *History of Buddhism*, trans. by E. Obermiller, pp. 131-132.

*Abhisamayālaṃkāra* which was written in the eleventh century (*Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārthapradīpa*, Pk 5201, Vol. 92, fol. 106.5.4). There, just four "definites" are given, "definite duration" being left out. *MSA* 9.61 and its commentaries explicitly characterize different *sāmbhogikakāyas* as differing in regard to their retinues, pure realms, names, forms, types of dharma enjoyed, and activities. Sthiramati, commenting on the different names and pure realms of *sāmbhogikakāyas*, identifies Vairocana, Amitābha, and Samantabhadra, in each of their different pure realms, all as *sāmbhogikakāyas*. This, of course, contradicts the notion of "definite place" which is first in Bu ston's list above.[57]

As we shall discuss in chapter 8 below, the ascription of the 32 marks and 80 signs of a *mahāpuruṣa* to the *sāmbhogikakāya* was done for the first time in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* 8th chapter. The 32 marks and 80 signs were not specifically attributed to the *sāmbhogikakāya* in the *MSA*, *Msg* or *RGV* (where they were simply listed among the set of *buddhadharmas*, or attributed to the *rūpakāya* in general). As will be explained in chapter 8 below, the *AA* was the first text in Indian Buddhism to make the specific attribution of the marks and signs to the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and it did so as part of its overall project of matching Yogācāra *kāyas* to *PP sūtra* descriptions of buddhahood (in this case matching the Yogācāra *sāmbhogikakāya* with the marks and signs listed in

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[57] *MSA* 9.61 and *bhāṣya*, Levi, p. 45. *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fol. 136a6-b5. Cf. *Msg* 10.35 and its commentaries which describe the way *sāmbhogikakāyas* differ from each other in appearance and are surrounded by diverse retinues, consisting of bodhisattvas, *śrāvakas*, *devas*, etc.

the corresponding section of the Large *PP sūtra*. Cf. chapter 8, section 4 below). The notion of "definite form" in Bu ston's list above, then, was probably passed on to Tibet through the Indian commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. It did not play a part in other Indian Mahāyāna textual traditions.

Because the infinite emanated forms of the Mahāyāna sūtras, identified as *nairmāṇikakāya*, represented the extensive activity of a Buddha throughout the entire universe (totally unrestricted with respect to place or time), our early sources characteristically identified the *nairmāṇikakāya* very closely with the Buddha's activity in general. Although both forms of *rūpakāya* represent a Buddha's manifestation to help beings, the *nairmāṇikakāya*, probably because of its tremendous range of activity throughout the universe, became more specifically identified with Buddha's activity throughout Yogācāra literature. The *sāmbhogikakāya* embodied a Buddha's shared enjoyment of dharma in a particular pure realm, while the *nairmāṇikakāya* was more closely associated with a Buddha's pervasive activity, being its more universal agent.

In the previous chapter we discussed the six category analysis of buddhahood which was popular in texts associated with the Yogācāra tradition. The fourth of these categories was *karma*, the Buddha's activity. *MSA* 9.58 explicitly identifies the *Buddha's* activity (*karma*) with his *nirmāṇa*, his emanations, identified at *MSA* 9.59 and 9.63 as comprising his *nairmāṇikakāya*. *MSA* 9.66 *bhāṣya* says the *kāyas* of all Buddhas are indistinguishable in basis (*āśraya*) (referring to the *svābhāvikakāya*), in aspiration (*āśaya*) (referring to the *sāmbhogikakāya*),

and in activity (*karma*) referring to the *nairmāṇikakāya*. At *MSA* 9.74-9.75 a Buddha's gnosis of accomplishing activities (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*) is identified with the *nairmāṇikakāya* alone. *MSA* 11.43 *bhāṣya* explicitly identifies Buddha's "excellence of activity" (*karmaviśeṣa*) with the *nairmāṇikakāya*, while his "excellence of shared enjoyment" (*sambhogaviśeṣa*) is identified with the *sāmbhogikakāya*. The *bhāṣya* on *Madhyāntavibhāga* 4.14, in its only mention of the three *kāyas*, specifically identifies *nairmāṇikakāya* as the activity of a Buddha. The *bhāṣya* on the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* identifies the *nairmāṇikakāya* as the support for accomplishing a Buddha's activities for sentient beings. A close identification between *nairmāṇikakāya* and Buddha's activity in general (*karma*, *kriya*) is characteristic of all early tri-*kāya* literature.[58]

One further point should be made on the permanence of a Buddha as regards the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*. The "*tathāgata*" or the "*tathāgatakāya*" is often described in Mahāyāna sūtras as permanent or eternal (*nitya*), which gives the impression that buddhahood as a whole is permanent in some sense. Therefore, Yogācāra śāstras also try to show how permanence can be ascribed to buddhahood as a whole, in spite of the fact that it possesses both conditioned (impermanent) and unconditioned (permanent) aspects. Formulas to address this appear in the *MSA*, the *Msg* and their commentaries. According to the *MSA* and its commentaries, the *dharmakāya* (=*svābhāvikakāya*) is simply permanent by nature (*svabhāvena nityatvam*). The *sāmbhogikakāya* and

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[58] *MSA* 9.58-59, 9.63, 9.66, 9.74-75, 11.43 and *bhāṣya*, Levi, pp. 44-47, 65. *MAV* 4.14 *bhāṣya*, Nagao, p. 56. *DDV bhāṣya*, sDe dge bi, 33a1-3.

*nairmāṇikakāya* are designated "permanent" in a secondary sense, the former because it uninterruptedly enjoys the dharma, the latter because it reappears again and again without cease to work for beings.[59] The *Msg* and its commentaries echo the *MSA*, and add the further observation that the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are designated "permanent" in a derivatory sense since the *dharmakāya*, which is intrinsically permanent, is their basis.[60]

6. Concluding Remarks

What has been described in this and the preceding chapter are the basic meanings of the terms "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*dharmakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," and "*nairmāṇikakāya*" as they were developed and understood in relation to each other throughout the earliest śāstric literature in which they appeared. The main sources we have drawn on, the *MSA*, *Msg*, *DDV*, *RGV*, and *Buddhabhūmisūtra* with their commentaries are generally dated by modern scholars from the third to the sixth century CE. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was probably composed sometime from the fourth to the early sixth century CE (this will be discussed in the next chapter). The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* usage of the multiple *kāya* terms above can not be understood if interpreted apart from

59 *MSA* 9.66 and *bhāṣya*, Levi, p. 46; Sthiramati's *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fols. 138a2-b2.
60 *Msg* 10.37, Lamotte, p. 98. Asvabhāva's *Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 295a3-5.

the entire body of contemporaneous literature in which those very terms were given meaning. What has been discussed in this and the preceding chapter, then, comprises an essential prelude to any reasonable interpretation of the meaning of *AA* chapter 8 where the same multiple *kāya* terminology we have been discussing appears.

# CHAPTER VI

# THE ABHISAMAYĀLAMKĀRA AND ITS EIGHTH CHAPTER ON BUDDHAHOOD

There are many *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) *sūtras*, of varying length and periods of composition. Edward Conze identified three of the most important of these, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* in 18,000, 25,000, and 100,000 verses, as three versions of one basic sūtra which he referred to as the "Large *Prajñāpāramitā*."[1] These three versions are basically the same in content, differing mainly in the extent to which they repeat the same *PP* formulas regarding the emptiness of all dharmas. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra prajñāpāramitopadeśaśāstra* (abbreviated *AA*) is a condensed, versified commentary on the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra.* It was most probably composed as a commentary on the large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* in its 25,000 verse version, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā prajñāpāramita sūtra* (evidence for this will be presented in the next chapter).

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[1] On the many different *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, see Conze, *PP Literature*, pp. 31-92. On the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* existing in three versions, see *ibid.*, p. 10. On the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, see *ibid.*, pp. 101-120; Obermiller, "The Doctrine of *Prajñāpāramitā* as exposed in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* of Maitreya;" Obermiller, *Analysis of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.

In chapter three above we noted that the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* present formulaic lists of "all dharmas" (*sarvadharmāḥ*, the mental and physical constituents of existence) which were understood to comprise all phenomena in the universe as earlier elaborated in Abhidharma literature. Unlike the Abhidharma, which took the dharmas (at least on their atomic or momentary level) to be ultimate constituents of the universe, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* explicitly negated the ultimacy of all dharmas by declaring them to be empty (*śūnya*) of self-existence (*svabhāva*). The *Prajñāpāramitā's* analysis leading to salvific wisdom (*prajñā*) does not find dharmas. It finds only their emptiness of self-existence (*svabhāvaśūnyatā*), the direct realization of which is known as the "*prajñāpāramitā*," the perfection of wisdom. The explicit theme of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, then, is the emptiness of all phenomena (*dharma śūnyatā*), and the direct realization of that emptiness (*prajñāpāramitā*). It is this theme which was explicated in detail in the famous commentaries of Nāgārjuna, a father of Mahāyāna Buddhism and founder of the Madhyamaka school.

To declare the emptiness of all phenomena, however, necessitated the delineation of all the phenomena which were understood to be empty. And in expressing the theme of universal emptiness, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* delineated all the dharmas which were understood to comprise not only the entire physical universe, but also all aspects of the minds of beings. This included not only the mental constituents of ordinary beings, but also all the meditative practices and yogic realizations known as "paths" (*mārga*), which Buddhist practitioners were understood to

cultivate in the gradual accomplishment of their enlightenments. Thus, in order to teach emptiness as their explicit message, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* also taught the various Buddhist paths, practices, and stages of realization as their implicit message.

It is this latter, implicit message of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* which the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* explained, doing so in a very terse, versified form. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* served as a condensed table of contents for the entire Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, and as a brief summary of all the practices, paths and stages of realization culminating in buddhahood understood to be implicit in the sūtra. It assigned to each portion of the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* its place among the various paths and stages to enlightenment. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* importance for the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition can not be overestimated. It and its commentaries have continuously dominated exegesis in India and Tibet on the implicit meaning of the *PP sūtras* for the past 1500 years (since the time of Ārya Vimuktisena, ca. sixth century CE). Even up to the present time in Tibetan Monasteries it has been the primary basis for study of Mahāyāna practice, the paths and stages of realization (*abhisamaya*). Surprisingly, as fundamental as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was to late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, it was never studied in China. Some of the important differences between Sino-Japanese Buddhism on the one hand and Indo-Tibetan Buddhism on the other proably stem, in part, from that fact.[2]

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[2] Conze, "Marginal Notes to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*," p. 21.

Although the *AA* purports to be a commentary on the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, and therefore expresses the content of that *sūtra*, it also employs schemata of the spiritual path and buddhahood, its result, which were not found in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. Some of these schemata developed in Yogācāra circles and were superimposed onto the textual material of the *PP sūtras* by the author of the *AA*.[3] This is especially true of *AA* chapter 8, concerning buddhahood, which employs the terms: "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," and "*nairmāṇikakāya*;" terms which were not to be found in the *PP sūtras* themselves but were developed, as we have seen, in texts associated with the Yogācāra tradition.

The *AA*, like other texts discussed in the previous two chapters (the *MSA*, *DDV*, *MAV*, and *RGV*), has been traditionally associated in the Indo-Tibetan tradition with Maitreya. Many of the *AA's* ideas and a number of its Sanskrit verses are very close to those in the other "Maitreya" texts. There is a substratum of concepts shared by all these texts. But whereas the other texts associated with Maitreya are synoptic commentaries, summarizing and explicating the content of many different Mahāyāna *sūtras* in the form of independent commentary, the *AA* was explicitly based section by section on the corresponding sections of the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*. Therefore, where it employs Yogācāra terminology foreign to the *PP sūtra* itself, it always tries to relate that

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[3] See Conze, *PP Literature*, pp. 102-104 for several examples of the *AA's* superimposition of Yogācāra categories onto material from the *PP sūtras*. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

terminology directly to *PP* textual material. Unlike the *MSA*, *Msg* or *DDV* (which we often quoted in the previous two chapters), the *AA* was not an independent commentary on Mahāyāna practice and philosophy, but a commentary always directed to and anchored in *PP sūtra* textual material. For this reason, the *AA* can not be properly understood unless read in close consultation with the corresponding sections of the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*. At the same time, it must be read in relation to the textual traditions of its time from which it draws terminology not found in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* (especially its eighth chapter which is structured through Yogācāra terminology). The implications of this will be further discussed in the next chapter.

From the perspective of modern scholarship, the date and authorship of the *AA* are still unknown. Haribhadra (ca. 770-810 CE), in his *Abhisamayālaṃkāra āloka* and *sphuṭārtha*, ascribed the *AA's* authorship to Maitreya (Wogihara, p. 1; Amano, 1975, p.2). But the late eighth century is a late time to ascribe such authorship (Maitreya, Asanga's teacher, allegedly having lived ca. 3rd to 4th century CE) and may well have been used as a means to ascribe greater authority to the text. Haribhadra also claimed that Asanga (ca. 4th century CE) and Vasubandhu (ca. 4th to 5th century CE) wrote commentaries on the *AA* (Wogihara, p. 1; Amano, 1975, p.2). If this is true, the *AA* was composed by the fourth century CE. It is hard to imagine the *AA's* having been composed much earlier than that, since as mentioned above, it sometimes employs a terminology drawn from Yogācāra textual traditions which developed from the 3rd to 4th century CE (traditions

which produced the *MSA*, *Msg*, etc.). The first *AA* commentary extant in any language is that of Ārya Vimuktisena (extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan, although only the first chapter of the Sanskrit has been published)[4]. Ārya Vimuktisena is generally dated in modern scholarship to the early sixth century CE. If his was the *AA's* first commentary, it would put the *AA's* terminus ad quem in the fifth or early sixth century. To be safe, then, we will assume here that the *AA* was composed sometime from the 4th to the early 6th century CE.[5].

Among the texts traditionally associated with Maitreya, the *AA* is unique in being a commentary explicitly on the *PP sūtras*, whose thought is a principal basis of the Madhyamaka School. It is perhaps for this

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4 Pensa's Sanskrit edition of *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti*, chapter 1.

5 On the dates mentioned in this paragraph, see Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, pp. 253-274; Frauwellner, "Landmarks in the History of Indian Logic;" Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation," pp. 14-49, 126-149; Ruegg, *La Theorie*, pp. 30-55, Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 101-103. Alexander Naughton, in his 1989 doctoral dissertation for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, entitled "The Buddhist Path to Omniscience," assigns the *AA* to the late sixth century based on the assumption that Ārya Vimuktisena, his student Bhadanta Vimuktisena, and Haribhadra represent an unbroken "lineage of the *AA*" where Haribhadra's date is set in the 8th century (Naughton, p. 112). But there is no reason to assume that a lineage of teaching and transmission of a text is restricted only to major commentators on that text whose commentaries happen to be extant. The *AA* commentator Dharmamītra (ca. 800 CE), thought to be an immediate successor of Haribhadra (Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, p. 102), explicitly mentions an "Upādhyāya Samyakvairocana" as Haribhadra's teacher for the *AA*, not Bhadanta Vimuktisena (*Prasphuṭapadā*, Pk 5194, Vol. 91, fol. 108-2-4). Haribhadra, in his *Āloka*, mentions his teacher, "*guru Vairocana*" (Wogihara, p. 993) and in the Tibetan translation of his *Sputārtha*, he bows to "The Upādhyāya Samyakvairocana" as his "excellent guru" (Amano, 1975, p. 301). This means that there was at least one, and quite possibly several gurus in the lineage of the *AA* between Haribhadra and the Vimuktisenas. Nor does Naughton give any reason to rule out the distinct possibility that Haribhadra, as he claimed, did know of commentaries on the *AA* by Asanga and Vasubandhu which are not presently extant. However, since we have no extant *AA* commentaries prior to Ārya Vimuktisena's, we can not totally rule out the possibility that Ārya Vimuktisena himself might have been the author of the *AA*. For this reason, as far as I can see, we can only say with some assurance that the *AA* was composed some time from the 4th to the early 6th century CE.

reason that most of the Indian commentaries on the *AA* that have come down to us (a few in Sanskrit manuscript, most in Tibetan translation in the Tibetan canon) are ascribed by Tibetan doxographers to Mādhyamikas, usually assigned to the "Yogācāra-Madhyamaka" school of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. A total of twenty-one Indian commentaries on the *AA* have been preserved in the Tibetan bsTan 'gyur.[6]

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[6] The twenty-one extant Indian commentaries on the *AA* are: The 12 commentaries which relate the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* directly to different versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*: 1. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitopadeśa-śāstra-abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* by Ārya Vimuktisena (extant in Sanskrit, the first chapter of which is edited in Pensa's edition, Pk 5185 in the Tibetan canon); 2. *Abhisamayālaṃkārakārikā-vārttika* by Bhadanta Vimuktisena (Pk 5186); 3. the revised version of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* (Tib. "*Leu brgyad ma*") ascribed to Haribhadra in the colophon of the Tibetan translation (a version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* in which the subject and topic names of the *AA* have been inserted above corresponding sections of the sūtra. Extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan, Pk 5188. This text will be discussed at length in the next chapter of this thesis); 4. *Suddhamatī* by Ratnākaraśānti (Pk 5199); 5. *Śatasāhasrikā-vivaraṇa* by Dharmaśrī (Pk 5203); 6. *Abhisamayālaṃkārāloka* by Haribhadra (Sanskrit editions by Wogihara, Tucci, Pk 5189); 7. *Sārattamā* by Ratnākaraśānti (Sanskrit edition by Jaini, Pk 5200); 8. *Marmakaumudī* by Abhayākaragupta (Pk 5202); 9. *Saṃcaya-gāthā-pañjikā subhodinī* by Haribhadra (Pk 5190); 10. *Saṃcaya-gāthā-pañjikā* by Buddhajñāna(pāda) (Pk 5196); 11. *Prajñāpāramitā-kośa-tāla* by Dharmaśrī (Pk 5204); 12. *Aṣṭa-samāna-artha-śāsana* by Smṛtijñānakīrti (Pk 5187). The 9 commentaries which explicate the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* independently: 1. *Sphuṭārthā* by Haribhadra (Sanskrit edition reconstructed by Amano based on *Āloka* and Tibetan (1975), recent partial Sanskrit manuscript published by Amano (1983-87), Pk 5191); 2. *Prasphuṭapadā* by Dharmamitra (Pk 5194); 3. *Durbodha-āloka* by Dharmakīrtiśrī (Pk 5192); 4. *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti-piṇḍārtha* by Prajñākaramati (Pk 5193); 5. *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha* by Kumāraśrībhadra (Pk 5195); 6. *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārthapradīpa* by Atīśa (Pk 5201); 7. *Prajñā-pradīpa-āvalī* by Buddhaśrījñāna (Pk 5198); 8. *Kīrtikalā* by Ratnakīrti (Pk 5197); 9. *Munimatālaṃkāra* by Abhayākaragupta (the third chapter of this work concerns the eight *abhisamayas* of the *AA*, Pk 5299). See: Obermiller, "The Doctrine of *Prajñāpāramitā*," pp. 9-11; Conze, *PP Literature*, pp. 33, 36, 50,51,55,112-115.

While most of the *AA* commentators were Madhyamakas of one kind or another, some are difficult to classify precisely in the scheme of later Tibetan doxography. It is not clear how to classify Ratnākaraśānti, who relied heavily on Yogācāra praxis and philosophy but considered Yogācāra and Madhyamaka as essentially compatible (Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 122-124). Nor is it clear how Ārya Vimuktisena should be classified, as his *AA* commentary freely uses Yogācāra categories like the three *svabhāvas* and eight *vijñānas* without ever explicitly identifying itself (at least to my eyes) as Madhyamaka. Yet, undoubtedly, it could be interpreted consistently as

As mentioned above, Haribhadra named Asanga's and Vasubandhu's as the first commentaries on the *AA*; but if true, they are not extant, nor were they known to Tibetan scholars. The first *AA* commentary extant is by Ārya Vimuktisena, ca. early sixth century CE. Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary aligned each verse of the *AA* with the section of the 25,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* which he took to correspond to it. Because the focus of this dissertation is *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8, Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary is especially important to us, because his interpretation of *AA* chapter 8, which held that it taught three Buddha *kāyas*, was followed by many other influential *AA* commentators in India and Tibet. Of special note among these commentators were Bhadanta Vimuktisena, Ratnākaraśānti, and Abhayākaragupta in India, and the Sa skya scholar Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge and his followers in Tibet.

The other Indian commentator of special importance to us is Haribhadra (ca. 770-810 CE) who presented a new interpretation of *AA* chapter 8, claiming that it taught four Buddha *kāyas* . This was the first time, to my knowledge, that any scholar had claimed that a non-Tantric Buddhist text explicitly taught four Buddha *kāyas*. Following Haribhadra in this view was Prajñākaramati, Kumāraśrībhadra and Buddhaśrījñāna in India, and later in Tibet, Tsong kha pa and the entire monastic tradition of the dGe lugs pa school which he founded.[7] Haribhadra became the

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as Yogācāra Madhyamaka if a doxologist seeks to do so. Dharmakīrtiśrī, a commentater on the *AA* who was famous in Tibet as Atiśa's teacher for cultivation of conventional *bodhicitta*, is reported to be Yogācāra, as is his disciple Ratnākīrti. (Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 109-110).

[7] Interestingly, Buddhajñāna(pāda), who is widely believed in Tibet to have been a disciple of Haribhadra (ca. 770-810), in his *AA* commentary (the *Saṃcayagāthāpañjikā*,

most influential Indian interpreter of *AA* doctrine to Tibetans, with virtually every major *AA* commentator in medieval Tibet writing a subcommentary on his *Sputārtha* (even those, like Go ram pa, who did not agree with all of Haribhadra's views, still wrote subcommentaries on his work).

In sum, then, interpretations of the 8th chapter of the *AA* in late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism tended to follow either Ārya Vimuktisena's or Haribhadra's view. And in Tibet, leading scholars of the Sa skya sect (those who followed Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge) chose Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation, while all commentators of the dGe lugs pa sect that I am aware of, following Tsong kha pa's lead, chose Haribhadra's interpretation. This disagreement over *AA* chapter 8 continues to the present day among scholars of the Sa skya and dGe lugs sects.

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* contains eight chapters of subject matter (*aṣṭapadārthāḥ*) with a brief synopsis of them as its ninth chapter. The

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Pk 5196, Vol. 91) follows not Haribhadra but Ārya Vimuktisena in interpreting *AA* 8 to be teaching three *kāyas*. Furthermore, he does so with a decidedly Yogācāran mode of explanation, based on a correlation between the eight *vijñānas*, the four Buddha *jñānas*, and the three *kāyas*, Pk 5196, fols. 152-5-6 to 153-1-4. The commentators in India I am familiar with who explicitly accepted and followed Haribhadra's interpretation of four Buddha *kāyas* for *AA* chapter 8 were Prajñākaramati (ca. 950-1000), Kumāraśrībhadra (date unknown to me), and Buddhaśrījñāna (ca. 1200) who composed the *Prajñāpradīpāvalī* on the *AA* (see Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 102, 110, 116, 117 on all these figures). If Buddhajñāna(pāda) was indeed Haribhadra's disciple as the Tibetan traditions believe, the fact that he did not follow Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 is significant. It may indicate that Haribhadra's interpretation was both new and controversial, and did not begin to receive ready acceptance in India for a century or more after his death. The commentary of Dharmamitra, who may have been an immediate successor of Haribhadra (Ruegg, *ibid.*, p.102), indicates that in his time there was real controversy surrounding Haribhadra's interpretation of four *kāyas* in *AA* 8 (Pk 5194, fols. 108-2-3 ff.). This will be further discussed in a later chapter 11 below.

subjects of the eight substantive chapters are the eight fundamental realizations (*abhisamayāḥ*, *abhisambodhāḥ*).

The subjects of the first three chapters of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* are the three knowledges (*jñātāḥ*) conforming to the capacities of three types of *ārya* (an *ārya* being a person who has had direct realization of emptiness on the *darśana mārga*, the path of seeing). The three types of knowledge explained in the first three chapters are *sarvākārajñatā* (total omniscience, the realization of a Buddha, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 1), *mārgajñatā* (knowledge of the paths, the realization of *ārya bodhisattvas*, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 2), and *sarvajñatā* (all-knowledge, the realization conforming to the insight of a *śrāvaka* or *pratyekabuddha ārya*, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 3). These three knowledges are the object of yogic practice (*viṣaya*, *AA* 9.2).

The subjects of the next four chapters of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* are the four yogic practices (*prayogāḥ*, *AA* 9.2) which take those three knowledges as their object and aim: *sarvākārābhisaṃbodha* (the full realization of all aspects, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 4), *mūrdhābhisamaya* (the realization at its summit, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 5), *anupūrvābhisamaya* (the gradual realization, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 6), and *ekakṣaṇābhisamaya* (the realization in a single moment, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 7).

Finally, the subject of the eighth chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is the final result (*phalaṃ*, *AA* 9.2) of the Mahāyāna path, the culmination of all the practices described in the prior chapters, the *dharmakāyābhisaṃbodha* (the realization of *dharmakāya*, buddhahood).

It is this, the eighth chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* concerning *dharmakāya*, which is the focus of this dissertation: its textual and historical antecedents in Indian Buddhism, and the disagreements in India and Tibet over its proper interpretation.

After two introductory verses, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* presents a versified table of contents (consisting of verses 1.3 through1.17) which summarizes its whole content in terms of these eight basic subjects (*aṣṭau padārthāḥ, dngos po brgyad*) and the seventy topics they encompass (*artha saptatiḥ, don bdun cu*).[8] Ārya Vimuktisena identifies these fifteen verses as the "*padārtha śarīra vyavasthānam*" (Tibetan "*dngos po lus rnam bzhag*"), "the setting forth of the corpus' subject matter," i.e. the table of contents for the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* as a whole.[9] The first two of these fifteen verses, *AA* vss. 1.3-1.4, present the eight basic subjects which comprise the *AA's* eight substantive chapters:

*prajñāpāramitāṣṭābhiḥ padārthaiḥ samudīritā/*
*sarvākārajñatā mārgajñatā sarvajñatā tataḥ//* *AA* 1.3
*sarvākārābhisambodho mūrdhaprāpto 'nupūrvikaḥ/*
*ekakṣaṇābhisambodho dharmakāyaś ca te'ṣṭadhā//* *AA* 1.4

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[8] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, *A Study on the Abhisamaya-alaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra-vṛtti*, pp. 14-16. Numbering of *AA* verses will follow Amano's 1975 edition. For what is still a good summary of the eight subjects and seventy topics of the *AA*, see Obermiller (1933), "Doctrine of the *PP*," pp. 61-85. But be aware that Obermiller, because he relies on dGe lugs pa commentaries, is following Haribhadra's analysis of *AA* 8, not Ārya Vimuktisena's.

[9] Pensa, p.14; Pk 5185 Vol. 88, fols. 9-2-2 to 9-4-3.

> The perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) is proclaimed through eight subjects, these eight being: total omniscience, knowledge of the paths, and then all-knowledge, the full realization of all aspects, the [realization] which has attained the summit, the gradual [realization], the realization in a single moment, and the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*).[10]
>
> *AA* 1.3-1.4

In the commentaries, these eight subjects serve as titles for the *AA's* eight substantive chapters. Note that the subject and title of the eighth chapter is identified simply as "*dharmakāya*," "the Dharma Body." All commentators understood this term, as it is employed in this particular verse, to refer simply to buddhahood as a whole, the result of the paths and practices described in the *AA's* earlier chapters. Tibetan commentators called this "*'bras bu chos sku*," "*dharmakāya* as result" (probably basing themselves on *AA* 9.2 which uses the expression "*dharmakāyaphalaṃ*" with this meaning).[11]

In the body of the *AA*, each of the eight subjects listed above is explained by reference to a number of topics (*artha*, *don*).[12] The first subject, *sarvākārajñatā* (total omniscience), is explained by reference to ten topics; the second subject, *mārgajñatā* (knowledge of the paths), is explained by reference to 11 topics; the third subject, *sarvajñatā* (all-

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10 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 14.

11 Note the correspondence between the use of the term "*dharmakāya*" in *AA* 1.4 and 9.2, meaning buddhahood as a whole (*dharmakāyaphalaṃ*), and the use of the term in *Abhidharmakośa* 7.34 and *bhāṣya*, "*dharmakāya phalasampad*," meaning *dharmakāya* as the entire result of the path (see chapter 2 above). Note also the correspondence to the Yogācāra use of the term "*dharmakāya*" when employed in its inclusive sense to refer to all of buddhahood, including all three *kāyas*, all gnoses, etc. (see chapter 4, section 5 above).

12 Obermiller, "Doctrine of the *PP*," pp. 61-85; Conze's English translation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, pp. 4-7.

knowledge), by reference to 9 topics; the fourth subject, *sarvākārābhisambodho* (full realization of all aspects), by reference to 11 topics; the fifth subject, *mūrdhābhisamaya* (realization at its summit), by reference to 8 topics; the sixth subject, *anupūrvābhisamaya* (gradual realization), by reference to 13 topics; the seventh subject, *ekakṣaṇābhisamaya* (realization in a single moment), by reference to 4 topics; and the eighth and final subject, *dharmakāya* (the dharma body), by reference to 4 topics. The explanation of all eight subjects, then, involves a total of seventy topics (*artha saptatiḥ, don bdun cu*) which comprise the eight substantive chapters of the *AA*.

The *AA's* table of contents continues with verses 1.5-1.17, which again name each of the eight substantive chapters and list in order (sometimes in abbreviated form) the topics contained in each of them. As our focus is the *AA's* eighth chapter on buddhahood, *AA* vs. 1.17 is particularly important to us, being the final verse of the *AA's* table of contents which serves as the specific table of contents for the *AA's* eighth chapter:

> *svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
> *dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//*[13] *AA* 1.17

[13] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 16. The Tibetan for this controversial verse is: "*ngo bo nyid longs rdzogs bcas dang/de bzhin gzhan pa sprul pa ni/chos sku mdzad pa dang bcas pa/rnam pa bzhir ni yang dag brjod//.*" *AA* 1.17. Because the Tibetan omits the *taddhita* morphology of the *kāya* names and the number of the verb (which clearly appear in the Sanskrit), later Tibetan interpretation of this verse (based only on the Tibetan translation) has not had a full philological apparatus at its disposal. This will be discussed in chapter 8, section 6 below.

We will not attempt a translation of this verse yet, as it stands at the very heart of the disagreement by later commentators over the meaning of *AA* chapter 8. Our own analysis and translation of this controversial verse will be made in chapter 8, section 2 of this thesis below. The terms "*caturdhā samudīritaḥ*" mean that the subject matter of the *AA's* eighth chapter is "proclaimed to be four-fold," i.e. that the chapter is explained through four topics. But the commentators disagreed over what the four topics were.

Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary says the verse teaches three *Buddha kāyas*, represented by the terms "*svābhāvikaḥ*," "*sasāmbhogo*," and *nairmāṇiko*." These are the first three topics of the chapter. The term "*dharmakāya,*" he says, designates the subject and the title of the chapter, understood to be buddhahood as a whole, *dharmakāya* as the total result of the path (*dharmakāyaphalaṃ*, Pk 5185, fol. 98-5-1). "*Sakāritraḥ*" refers to the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activity, which he identifies as the chapter's fourth topic. According to Ārya Vimuktisena, then, the four topics of the eighth chapter are the three *Buddha kāyas* (as discussed in the previous two chapters of this thesis) and the activity (*kāritraḥ*, *karma*) associated with the *nairmāṇikakāya.*[14]

Haribhadra read the verse quite differently. His commentaries say the term "*dharmakāya*" designates a fourth *kāya*, a *kāya* consisting of Buddha's gnosis (*jñānātmaka dharmakāyaḥ*), that *AA* chapter 8 is therefore describing buddhahood through four *kāyas* (*svābhāvikakāya*,

[14] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 92-4-6 to 100-3-7.

*[jñānā] dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*), and that these four *kāyas* comprise the four topics of that chapter (a Buddha's activity, "*kāritraḥ*," being an adjunct quality of the *[jñāna] dharmakāya*).[15]

Having glanced at the table of contents for *AA* chapter 8 (*AA* 1.17), we now turn to the verses of the chapter itself. *AA* chapter 8, verse one describes a Buddha's *svābhāvikakāya* (the Body in its Essence, or Essence Body):

> *sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ/*
> *svābhāviko muneḥ kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛti-lakṣaṇaḥ//* *AA* 8.1
>
> The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects,
> The Essence Body (*svābhāvikakāya*) of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic.[16] *AA* 8.1

The commentaries of both Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra agree that this verse teaches the first *kāya* of a Buddha, the *svābhāvikakāya*, the Essence Body (or The Body in its Essence), understood in some sense to be the innate nature (*prakṛti*) of the undefiled dharmas (the undefiled dharmas being a Buddha's pure mental qualities, which are often listed among the totality of dharmas understood to comprise the psycho-physical universe in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. On them, see chapter 3 above).

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[15] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975 pp. 262-296; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 914-926. See chapter four of this thesis, page one, note 2 on the term "*[jñāna] dharmakāya*."
[16] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 262.

Verses 8.2 through 8.6 list these undefiled dharmas, divided into twenty one types, and then relate them to the word "*dharmakāya*," Body of Dharma:

*bodhipakṣāpramāṇāni vimokṣā anupūrvaśaḥ/*
*navātmikā samāpattiḥ kṛtsnaṃ daśavidhātmakam//* AA 8.2
*abhibhvāyatanāny aṣṭa prakārāṇi prabhedataḥ/*
*araṇā praṇidhijñānam abhijñāḥ pratisamvidaḥ//* AA 8.3
*sarvākārāś catasro 'tha śuddhayo vaśitā daśa/*
*balāni daśa catvāri vaiśāradyāny arakṣaṇam//* AA 8.4
*trividhaṃ smṛtyupasthānaṃ tridhāsammoṣa-dharmatā/*
*vasanāyāḥ samudghāto mahatī karuṇā jane//* AA 8.5
*āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭadaśeritāḥ/*
*sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate//* AA 8.6

"The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage which are proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated.[17]

*AA* 8.2-8.6

[17] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 264. Some of my translations of the terms for the twenty-one types of undefiled *Buddha dharma* are interpretive, based on the Indian *AA* commentaries which explain the meanings of the terms, particularly the commentaries by Ārya Vimuktisena, Haribhadra, Dharmamitra, Dharmakīrtiśrī, Ratnākaraśānti, and Abhayākaragupta.

Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early sixth century) understood all of *AA* chapter 8's first six verses to be teaching one *kāya* of the Buddha, which is called "*svābhāvikakāya*" (Essence Body) in verse 1, and called "*dharmakāya*" (Dharma Body) in verse 6. In other words, his commentary treats the term "*dharmakāya*" of verse 6 as a synonym for the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" of verse 1.[18] Haribhadra (late eighth century) reinterpreted the verses, arguing that Ārya Vimuktisena had been mistaken in his understanding of these two key terms. According to Haribhadra, "*svābhāvikakāya*" of verse 1 and "*dharmakāya*" of verse 6 are not synonyms. They refer to two different aspects of buddhahood comprising two different Buddha *kāyas*. "*Svābhāvikakāya*" in verse 1, Haribhadra claimed, refers to the ultimate nature of the undefiled dharmas, their *dharmatā* or *śūnyatā*; while "*dharmakāya*" in verse 6 refers to the set of those undefiled dharmas as conventional existents (which he called "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*," the "*dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis"). For Haribhadra, the emptiness of Buddha's gnosis (its ultimate nature, *paramārtha*) and the gnosis itself (as conventionally existent, *saṃvṛti*) were designated in the *AA* as two different *kāyas*: the "*svābhāvikakāya*" (of verse 1) and the [*jñānātmaka*] "*dharmakāya*" (of verse 6) respectively.[19] Of course, Ārya Vimuktisena's and Haribhadra's interpretations of *AA* 8 vss. 1-6 are closely related to their interpretations of *AA* 1.17, which is the table of contents for the *AA's* 8th chapter.

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[18] *Abhisamayālamkāravṛtti*, Pk 5185, Vol. 88, fols. 92-4-6 to 92-5-7. Sanskrit for the first chapter of this text has been edited by C. Pensa. Up to the present time, the rest of the text is available only in the Tibetan canon.
[19] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 262-270; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 914-917.

The *AA's* eighth chapter continues with two verses which show the superiority of the Buddha's gnosis over that of *śrāvakas* (disciples on non-Mahāyāna Buddhist paths) and other lesser saints:

> *śrāvakasyāraṇā dṛṣṭer nṛkleśaparihāritā/*
> *tatkleśasrota-ucchittyai grāmādiṣu jināraṇā//* AA 8.7
> *anābhogam anāsaṅgam avyāghātaṃ sadā sthitaṃ/*
> *sarvapraśnāpanud bauddhaṃ praṇidhijñānam iṣyate//* AA 8.8
>
> A disciple's meditative power freeing from passions is the avoidance of men's passions [arising] from seeing [that disciple]. The Victor's [Buddha's] meditative power freeing from passions is for cutting off the stream of their passions in towns, etc. It is accepted that the Buddha gnosis [resulting from] resolve is automatic, unattached, unobstructed, forever operative, and answers all questions.[20] AA 8.7-8.8

The *araṇā samādhi* (meditative power freeing from passions, literally the "non-passion *samādhi*") and *praṇidhijñāna* (the gnosis resulting from resolve) described in these verses, like most of the other undefiled dharmas listed in *AA* verses 8.2-8.6, appear in earlier Abhidharma descriptions where they are ascribed not only to Buddhas but also to lesser saints: *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, etc.[21] The AA's author evidently selects these two out of the twenty-one types of undefiled dharma in verses 8.2-8.6 as examples to demonstrate how all of a Buddha's mental-yogic qualities (dharmas) are superior to those of all other beings,

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20 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 270.

21 For references on *araṇā* and *praṇidhijñāna* throughout Buddhist literature, see Lamotte's translation of *Msg*, "Notes et References," p. 53*.

including those qualities which bear the same names as those ascribed in earlier Abhidharma literature to lesser beings.[22]

The commentaries on *AA* 8.7 explain that a *śrāvaka's* meditative power freeing from passions (*araṇā*) is a meditative concentration through which the *śrāvaka* knows how to avoid coming into contact with others whose passions would be aroused by seeing him. The yogic quality of the same name ascribed to a Buddha is said to be far superior. A Buddha avoids contact with no one. He freely enters crowded and populous areas such as towns, because, by the force of his yogic power, contact with him actually stops passions from arising in anyone he approaches.

The commentaries on *AA* 8.8 say that a Buddha's gnosis is distinguished from that of any lesser being by the five qualities listed in the verse. In Abhidharma texts, the *praṇidhijñāna* (gnosis resulting from resolve) is ascribed in common to the various types of Buddhist yogi. It involves first a resolve to know something, and then the accomplishment of the capacity to know that thing through yogic practice. The fulfillment of a bodhisattva's resolve to know everything necessary to assist all living beings results in the unique properties of a Buddha's gnosis: its being spontaneous, free of personal concern, knowing all things in all times (i.e. literally omniscient), operative to the end of saṃsāra, and able to help beings according to each one's precise problem or question. The gnosis of

[22] *Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 917, lines. 17-19. Haribhadra's explanation here seems just right.

the same name ascribed to *śrāvakas* and other lesser yogis is said to lack those five properties.[23]

These verses have close parallels in Yogācāra texts. *AA* 8.8, for example, is almost identical to *Msg* 10.13 (which is a quotation of *MSA* 21.46), and *AA* 8.7 is very close to *Msg* 10.12 (= *MSA* 21.45). In fact, most of the verses comprising *AA* chapter 8 closely parallel the concepts and expressions of the texts discussed in the previous two chapters of this thesis (the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, etc.). This will be analyzed at length in chapter 8 of this thesis below.

We continue with *AA* verses 8.9 and 8.10:

> *paripākaṃ gate hetau yasyayasya yadāyadā/*
> *hitaṃ bhavati kartavyaṃ prathate tasyatasya saḥ//* AA 8.9
> *varṣaty api hi parjanye naivābījaṃ parohati/*
> *samutpāde 'pi buddhānāṃ nābhavyo bhadram aśnute//* AA 8.10
>
> When the cause has reached fruition, whenever and for whomever there is benefit to be accomplished, then and there he appears. AA 8.9
> But even when the god of rain pours down rain, an infertile seed does not sprout. So even when Buddhas arise, one who is unfit does not obtain the blessedness.[24] AA 8.10

*AA* verse 8.8 had given the impression that a Buddha's gnosis, and therefore his capacity to manifest and help beings, was limitless and

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23 On *araṇāsamādhi* and *praṇidhijñāna*: Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 94-5-1 to 94-5-8; Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 270-272; Ratnākaraśānti's *Śuddhamatī*, Pk 5199, 281-5-6 to 282-1-3; Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, 478-6 ff., 489-3 ff. Also refer to all commentaries on *MSA* 21.45-46, *Msg*, 10.12-13 which correspond to *AA* 8.7-8.8.
24 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 272-274.

always operative. It is natural to wonder, then, why more suffering persons do not have some sort of recognizable, direct contact with a Buddha. Verses 8.9 and 8.10 address this by reference to the Buddhist world-view framed by karmic causality. According to the theory of *karma*, whatever a person experiences is primarily the fruition of his or her own past mental, verbal and physical actions (usually actions of a previous life). Although a Buddha's gnosis is universally pervasive (*AA* 8.8), able to manifest a form to teach a being anywhere at any time, each individual can perceive Buddha and his teaching only in accord with his or her own karma. In other words, a Buddha, from his own side, is always universally accessible. But whether a particular person has contact with a Buddha's manifestation is entirely dependent on the condition of that individual's own mind. Even though Buddha can manifest anywhere at any time, an individual whose mind is unprepared (i.e. lacking enough previous virtue) is incapable of coming into contact with such a manifestation, much like a burnt or rotten seed can not sprout no matter how much it may rain.[25]

*AA* verse 8.11 concerns the pervasiveness (*vyāpitvaṃ*) and permanence (*nityatā*) which the Mahāyāna sūtras ascribe to buddhahood:[26]

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[25] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 272-274; *Durbodha-āloka* by Dharmakīrtiśrī, Pk 5192, 49-3-4 to 49-5-8.

[26] See chapter five of this thesis above, sections 3 and 5, on descriptions in Mahāyāna *sūtras* and Yogācāra *śāstras* of buddhahood as permanent. See also *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* of Ārya Vimuktisena, Pk 5185, 96-2-5.

*iti kāritra vaipulyād buddho vyāpī nirucyate/*
*akṣayatvāc ca tasyaiva nitya ity api kathyate//* AA 8.11

Because of such extensiveness of activity, Buddha is declared to be pervasive. And because of his inexhaustibility, he is called "permanent."[27] AA 8.11

Because a Buddha's manifested activity is universal in the sense explained in the previous two verses, he is often declared "pervasive" in the Mahāyāna texts.[28] And because Buddha's gnosis, as mentioned in verse 8.8, is "forever operative," forever and "inexhaustibly" engaged in the world to help beings through such activity, he is declared "permanent" or "eternal" (*nitya*). We may note that this way of interpreting a Buddha's permanence applies equally to all of the *kāyas* we have been discussing in previous chapters of this thesis, since none cease operating, appearing, or reappearing until the end of saṃsāra. It conforms to the descriptions of a Buddha's permanence, taken as applicable to all of buddhahood, as they are given in the Yogācāra texts mentioned at the very end of the previous chapter.[29]

Ārya Vimuktisena interprets all the preceding verses of *AA* chapter 8, verses 8.1 through 8.11, as concerning the *svābhāvikakāya*.[30] Haribhadra

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[27] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 274.

[28] I refer the reader to the previous chapter of this thesis on Buddha's pervasive activity.

[29] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 274, bottom. Haribhadra's comments here refer back to his comments on *AA* vss. 8.8 and 8.9 (Amano, 1975 p. 272) where he also uses the phrases "*pratibhāsa ... kriyākarī* [*karaṇa*] " and "*ā saṃsāram avasthāna*," the former with reference to Buddha's capacity to act anywhere, any time (i.e. his pervasiveness, vs. 8.9), the latter with reference to his gnosis (*jñāna*) being forever operative (*sadā sthitam*, i.e. permanent in the sense of eternality, vs. 8.8).

[30] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 96-2-5. After discussing *AA* verses 8.1-8.11, Ārya Vimuktisena says: "*ngo bo nyid kyi sku bshad zin to/*," "the *svābhāvikakāya* has been explained."

says only the first verse concerns the *svābhāvikakāya*; while verses 8.2 through 8.11 concern what he has identified as a second *kāya*, the "*jñānātmakadharmakāya*" (the "gnosis *dharmakāya*").[31] All commentators agree, however, that the next verse, *AA* verse 8.12, describes the *sāmbhogikakāya* (the Shared Enjoyment Body, or the Body in its Shared Enjoyment).

> *dvātriṃśallakṣaṇāśītivyañjanātmā muner ayam/*
> *sāmbhogiko mataḥ kāyo mahāyānopabhogataḥ//* *AA* 8.12
>
> This, having the character of the thirty-two marks and eighty signs, is considered [to be] the Body of the Sage in its Shared Enjoyment (*sāmbhogikakāya*), because of its enjoyment of the great vehicle (*mahāyāna*).[32] *AA* 8.12

This verse refers to the thirty-two marks and eighty signs characteristic of the great being (*mahāpuruṣa*) in Indian legend. Here the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (ca. 4th to early 6th century CE) specifically ascribes these marks and signs to the glorified Buddha form which was identified in the *MSA*, *Msg* and their commentaries as "*sāmbhogikakāya*." The thirty-two marks and eighty signs are listed and discussed in some detail in the various versions of the *Large Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*.[33] But within

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31 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 265-276; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 915-918.

32 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 276.

33 Conze, *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, pp. 583-587, 657-665; *Gilgit Manuscript*, pp. 171-180. See also Alex Wayman, "Contributions Regarding the Thirty-two Characteristics of the Great Person," *Liebenthal Festschrift*, 1957, pp. 249-255, where Wayman noted that the eighty signs serve as a kind of commentary on the thirty-two marks according to Śākyamitra's commentary on the *Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra*. Wayman did not mention in this article that earlier Dharmamitra (ca. 800 CE), in his *Prasphuṭapadā* commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, had identified the eighty signs as forming the retinue of the thirty-two marks. Dharmamitra specifically aligns subsets

the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* themselves, the Buddha figure possessing these marks and signs was never identified as "*sāmbhogikakāya*." As noted earlier, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* used only the *kāya* categories "*rūpakāya*" (Body of Form, Buddha's manifestation in physical form for others) and "*dharmakāya*," (Body of Dharma, the essence of buddhahood as realization of *śūnyatā*, i.e. *prajñāpāramitā*). The possessor of the marks and signs within the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, then, was considered an exemplification of the *rūpakāya*, there being no formal differentiation of *sāmbhogikakāya* from *nairmāṇikakāya* in those sūtras.

Prior to the *AA*, the various Yogācāra texts teaching *sāmbhogikakāya* (the *MSA*, *Msg*, etc.) did not specifically identify the thirty-two marks and eighty signs with the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and certainly did not define that *kāya* in terms of those marks and signs. Like the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* the Yogācāra traditions ascribed the marks and signs to *rūpakāya* in general, meaning that they were present equally on *nairmāṇikakāya*, at least in certain forms (e.g. Śākyamuni) and on *sāmbhogikakāya*. The *AA's* eighth chapter represents the first time in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, to my knowledge, that the *sāmbhogikakāya* (in contradistinction to the *nairmāṇikakāya*) was singled out as the possessor of the marks and signs. It is also the only place in this historical stage of the literature that the primary definition of *sāmbhogikakāya* is made with reference to the marks and signs. This provides a good indication of what

of the eighty signs as different retinues around each of the thirty-two marks (*Prasphuṭapadā*, Pk 5194, 11-4-4 to 112-1-6). Tsong kha pa quotes Dharmamitra on this in his *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, pp. 497-6 ff. Lamotte, in the appendix to his translation of *Msg*, pp. 54*-58*, gives a bibliography of the thirty-two marks and eighty signs throughout Buddhist literature.

sort of task the author of the *AA* had set for himself in his eighth chapter: to match Yogācāra concepts of buddhahood (e.g. *sāmbhogikakāya*) with the expressions of buddhahood which he found in the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* (e.g. the list of the marks and signs). More on this will be said in following chapters.

Verses 8.13-8.32 of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* can be summarized as follows: Verses 8.13 through 8.17 simply list the thirty-two marks of the *mahāpuruṣa* which were ascribed to the *sāmbhogikakāya* in verse 8.12: marks of wheels on his hands and feet, an *uṣṇīṣa* (crown protuberance), firm feet like a tortoise, webbing between the fingers and toes, a heavenly voice, etc. This replicates the list of the thirty-two marks provided in the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*.[34] Verses 8.18 through 8.20 then provide a partial list of the virtuous practices of the bodhisattva on the path which are the causes producing the thirty-two marks upon his attainment of buddhahood. This is also drawn from the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, particularly the version in 25,000 verses, which lists the virtuous practices which are the causes for each of the thirty-two marks, practices such as following spiritual teachers, maintaining vows, bringing others to the teaching, giving gifts, etc.[35] Verses 8.21 through 8.32 then list the eighty signs ascribed to the *sāmbhogikakāya* in verse 8.12.

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34 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, Amano, 1975, pp. 276-278; Conze, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, (English translation) pp. 98-99; Conze, *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, pp. 657-659.

35 Conze, *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, pp. 658-661. Conze finds the passage identifying the virtuous causes for each of the thirty-two marks only in the Sanskrit manuscript of the revised version of the 25,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, not in the Sanskrit manuscripts of the versions in 18,000 or 100,000 verses. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* says specifically in verse 8.20 that it drew its list of virtuous causes from the sūtra ("*yathāsūtram*"), i.e. from the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*. Ārya Vimuktisena's

Because *AA* verses 8.13-8.32 concern the specifics of the marks and signs beyond what is of importance to this dissertation, I refer the reader to the Sanskrit text and Conze's translation of those verses.[36] We will focus on the *AA* verses of particular relevance to our concerns: the overall expressions of and logic behind the theory of multiple Buddha *kāyas* found in the *AA* and the textual traditions related to it.

We continue then with *AA* verses 8.33 through 8.40 which concern the *nairmāṇikakāya* and the *karma* (or *kāritra*, activity) of buddhahood. Verse 8.40, it should be noted, is the final verse of the *AA's* eighth chapter:

*karoti yena citrāṇi hitāni jagataḥ samaṃ/*
*ā bhavāt so 'nupacchinnaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko muneḥ//* *AA* 8.33

*tathā karmāpy anucchinnam asyā saṃsāram iṣyate/* *AA* 8.34a
*gatīnāṃ śamanaṃ karma saṃgrahe ca caturvidhe//* *AA* 8.34b

*niveśanaṃ sasaṃkleśe vyavadānāvabodhane/*
*sattvānām arthayāthātmye ṣaṭsu pāramitāsu ca//* *AA* 8.35

*buddhamārge prakṛtyaiva śūnyatāyāṃ dvayakṣaye/*
*saṃkete 'nupalambhe ca paripāke ca dehināṃ//* *AA* 8.36

*bodhisattvasya mārge 'bhiniveśasya nivāraṇe/*
*bodhiprāptau jinakṣetraviśuddhau niyatiṃ prati//* *AA* 8.37

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commentary quotes from the 25,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* the passages on the virtuous causes of the thirty-two marks (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 96-5-8 to 97-4-4). His quotation differs in places from the revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan. This indicates that the version of the 25,000 *PP* available to him in his time (ca. early 6th century CE) contained the passage in question, although not in the exact form it came down to us in the later revised version of the sūtra. On the various versions of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*, see the chapter 7 of this thesis.

[36] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* vss. 8.13-8.32 as imbedded in the *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 276-284; English translation in Conze, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, pp. 98-102.

*aprameye ca sattvārthe buddhasevādike guṇe/*
*bodher aṅgeṣv anāśe ca karmaṇāṃ satyadarśane//* AA 8.38

*viparyāsaprahāṇe ca tadavastukatānaye/*
*vyavadāne sasambhāre saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛte prati//* AA 8.39

*vyatibhedāparijñāne nirvāṇe ca niveśanaṃ/* AA 8.40a
*dharmakāyasya karmedaṁ saptaviṃśatidhā mataṃ//* AA 8.40b

The Body of the Sage in its Emanation (*nairmāṇikakāya*) is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world]. AA 8.33

Likewise, it is agreed, its activity (*karma*) is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: AA 8.34a

the activity (*karma*) which pacifies the states of rebirth, which establishes [beings] in the fourfold means of collecting [disciples], AA 8.34b

which establishes (*niveśanaṃ*) them in the comprehension of affliction and purification, in the proper nature of the welfare of beings, and in the six perfections, AA 8.35

which establishes them in the Buddha path, in the emptiness of intrinsic nature, in non-duality, in conventional symbolization (*saṃkete*), in non-perception, and in the maturing of embodied beings, AA 8.36

which establishes them in the bodhisattva path, in preventing adherence [to things], in the attainment of enlightenment (*bodhi*), in the purity of a Buddha's realm, in definite destiny, AA 8.37

which establishes them in the welfare of limitless beings, in the excellence of attending upon and devoting onesself to the Buddhas, in the limbs of enlightenment, in the non-wastefulness of deeds (*karma*), and in the vision of the truths, AA 8.38

> which establishes them in the elimination of false views, in the method of [ascertaining] the baselessness of those [views], in purification and its accompanying accumulation, in the knowledge of non-distinction between conditioned and unconditioned, and which establishes them [finally] in *nirvāṇa.*
> *AA* 8.39-8.40a
>
> This is regarded as the twenty-sevenfold activity of the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*).[37] *AA* 8.40b

Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary interprets these verses straightforwardly as follows: First, he reads verse 8.33 as semantically conjoined to the first half of verse 8.34 (marked "8.34a" above):

> The Body of the Sage in its Emanation (*nairmāṇikakāya*) is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world].
> Likewise, it is agreed, its activity is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: .... *AA* 8.33-8.34a

He therefore understands the phrase "its activity" ("*karma...asya*") in 8.34a to refer to the activity of the *nairmāṇikakāya*, the Body in its Emanation. Verses 8.34b through 8.40a name the twenty-seven types of activity which *AA* chapter 8 ascribes to buddhahood. According to the author of the *AA*, these are the active means through which a Buddha works for the welfare of beings, ultimately establishing them in enlightenment itself. These twenty-seven types of activity are, broadly speaking, the subject matter of a corresponding portion of the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*. Their correspondence to the sūtra will be

[37] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 290-292.

discussed in the next chapter of this thesis. Because Ārya Vimuktisena reads verses 33 and 34a together, he understands all the activities to which they refer to be the *nairmāṇikakāya's*. But he also takes note of the fact that this entire section of *AA* chapter 8, from verse 8.33 through 8.40, ends with the following half-verse:

> This is regarded as the twenty-sevenfold activity of the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*). *AA* 8.40b

According to Ārya Vimuktisena, the term "Dharma Body" ("*dharmakāya*") in this half-verse refers to buddhahood taken as a whole, *dharmakāya* as the total result of the path (*dharmakāya phalam*). He understands the term "*dharmakāya*" here to have the same inclusive meaning that he understands it to have in verse *AA* 1.17, i.e. the entire resultant state of buddhahood. Thus, for Ārya Vimuktisena, *AA* verses 8.33 through 8.40 explain the way in which buddhahood as resultant *dharmakāya* engages in activity for sentient beings by means of its emanations, i.e. by means of the *nairmāṇikakāya*. For him, verses 8.33 through 8.40 concern the *nairmāṇikakāya* and its twenty-seven types of activity, where the *nairmāṇikakāya* is understood as the resultant *dharmakāya's* manifestation for the purpose of carrying out its activity in the world.[38]

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[38] *Abhisamayālamkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 98-4-7, 98-5-1 to 98-5-2, 98-5-7, and 100-3-6. At 98-4-7, Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the portion of the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* which explains the second of the twenty-seven activities as being "a teaching on the activity of the *nairmāṇikakāya*." Within the context of his commentary, he thereby implies that all the activities are the *nairmāṇikakāya's*. At 98-5-1 to 98-5-2, he identifies verses 8.33-8.34a taken together as concerning the activity of completed buddhahood, the

Therefore, we may note, it is only at verse 8.6 that Ārya Vimuktisena interprets the term "*dharmakāya*" in an exclusive sense, i.e. as synonymous with the term "*svābhāvikakāya*," referring only to the first of the three *kāyas*. At verses 1.17 and 8.40, he interprets it in an inclusive sense, as resultant *dharmakāya*, which includes all *kāyas* and all qualities of buddhahood.

Haribhadra, in keeping with his reading of *AA* 1.17 which is very different from Ārya Vimuktisena's, gives a very different interpretation of *AA* verses 8.33-8.40. We present *AA* 1.17 again for reference:

> *svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
> *dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//* *AA* 1.17

As noted above, Haribhadra interpreted the term "*dharmakāya*" in this verse as a "*[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*," a "*dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis," which he said comprised a fourth Buddha *kāya*.[39] For him,

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complete result of the path, fundamental transformation (*āśrayaparivṛtti*), i.e. the *dharmakāya* in the inclusive sense. But he also specifically says that its activity is carried out by means of limitless emanations (*nirmāṇa*) into the worlds of beings, i.e. by the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Recall the discussion of the Sanskrit taddhita forms of the *kāya* names in the previous chapters. For Ārya Vimuktisena, "*nairmāṇikakāya*" means quite literally "the Body in its Emanation" where "Body" means "Dharma Body" (*dharmakāya*). Therefore at 98-5-7, he refers to the twenty-seven activities as activities "of the *dharmakāya*." And at 100-3-6 he explicitly aligns *AA* verse 1.17a with verse 8.40b, saying: "'In its essence, with its enjoyment, and so also in its emanation' (*AA* 1.17a) shows three of the aspects [of the resultant *dharmakāya*], and the teaching 'this activity of the Dharma Body is regarded as twenty-seven-fold' (*AA* 8.40b) is to be understood as explained [i.e. as the fourth aspect of the resultant *dharmakāya*]." The "aspects" he is referring to are the four topics of *AA* chapter 8: the three *kāyas* as operative modes of the resultant *dharmakāya*, and its activity. In other words, he takes the term "*dharmakāya*" as inclusive (referring to the total resultant state of buddhahood) both in verse 1.17 and in verse 8.40.

39 *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 915 line 21, 916 lines 18 and 22, 918 line 12.

then, the terms "*svābhāvikaḥ*," "*sasāmbhogo*," "*nairmāṇiko*," and "*dharmakāya*" in verse 1.17 designated four different *kāyas*. And the term "*kāritraḥ*," meaning activity, was placed just after the term "*dharmakāya*" to show that the Buddha's activity was attributable specifically to his "*[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*" (not to his *svābhāvikakāya*, which for Haribhadra signified only the unconditioned aspect of buddhahood, a permanent, which can not be a basis of activity).

In line with his interpretation of *AA* 1.17, Haribhadra isolates verse 8.33 as the only verse in the *AA's* eighth chapter to teach the *nairmāṇikakāya*. He understands 8.34 through 8.40 inclusive to be teaching the twenty-seven activities which are to be specifically associated with the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*. The activities listed in those verses are specifically ascribed to the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya* alone, he says, because it is that *kāya* alone, as pure, impermanent gnosis, which serves as the primary cause to generate all of a Buddha's activities through various manifestations. Because he interprets *svābhāvikakāya* entirely as a permanent, it can not be identified in his scheme as the basis of activity, an impermanent. The two *rūpakāyas*, since they are understood by Haribhadra as mere manifestations of the Buddha's gnosis, also can not be identified as the fundamental cause of the activity. In his scheme, only the gnosis can be so identified. Thus, Haribhadra interprets the term "*dharmakāya*" of verse 8.40b to mean "*[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*," the

*dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis, which he takes as semantically equivalent to the same term in verse 1.17.[40]

In order to make this interpretation of verses 8.33-8.40, Haribhadra has to perform some hermeneutic gymnastics with the important half-verse 8.34a. Again verses 8.33-8.34a read as follows:

> *karoti yena citrāṇi hitāni jagataḥ samaṃ/*
> *ā bhavāt so 'nupacchinnaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko muneḥ//* AA 8.33
>
> *tathā karmāpy anucchinnam asyā saṃsāram iṣyate/* AA 8.34a
>
> The Body of the Sage in its Emanation (*nairmāṇikakāya*) is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world]. *AA* 8.33
>
> Likewise, it is agreed, its activity is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: ..... *AA* 8.34a

Haribhadra interprets the phrase "its activity" ("*karma...asya*") to mean the activity of the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*. This requires the assumption that verse 8.34a is continuing a train of thought, not from the immediately preceding verse 8.33 (on *nairmāṇikakāya*), but rather from the much earlier verse 8.11. As mentioned above, Haribhadra interpreted all of verses 8.2 through 8.11 as concerning the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*. In particular, he took half-verse 8.11b to be a discussion of the eternality of the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*. In one of his final remarks on *AA* chapter 8, he draws the subject matter of the set of verses

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[40] *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 290-296; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 923-925.

8.34a-8.40 and that of verse 8.11 together by applying the key phrase "*ā saṃsāram*" ("for as long as cyclic existence lasts") identically to both. He says: "Thus, it is agreed, like the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* [of verse 8.11], its twenty-sevenfold activity [of verses 8.34a to 8.40] lasts as long as cyclic existence."[41] We will examine Haribhadra's interpretations at greater length in chapter 10 below.

Finally, there is one other verse of great importanance toward an accurate interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. That is the final verse of the entire *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, verse 9.2. This verse summarizes the content of the entire text in terms of three basic topics, the object of yogic practice, the yogic practice itself, and the ultimate result of the practice:

> *viṣayas tritayo hetuḥ prayogaś caturātmakaḥ/*
> *dharmakāyaphalaṃ karmety anyas tredhārthasaṃgrahaḥ//* *AA* 9.2
>
> The three-fold object, as cause, the four-fold practice,
> the Dharma Body [with its] activity as result, thus in another way
> is [the entire subject matter] summarized in three topics.[42]

In brief, the "three-fold" object is *sarvākārajñatā*, *mārgajñatā*, and *sarvajñatā*, the subjects of the *AA's* first three chapters, the knowledges to be realized through meditative practice. "The four-fold practice" comprises *sarvākārābhisambodha*, *mūrdhābhisamaya*, *anupūrvābhisamaya*, and *ekakṣaṇābhisamaya*, the subjects of the *AA's*

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41 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 296 bottom; *Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 925 lines 3-4. The only place I have found in his commentaries where Haribhadra employs the phrase "*ā saṃsāram*" to the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* is in his remarks on vs. 8.11 (Amano, 1975, p. 274; Wogihara, p. 918 line 11).
42 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 298.

next four chapters, the yogic practice itself. "The result" is the *dharmakāya* in its inclusive sense, the entire state of buddhahood including its activity (*karma*), the subject matter of the *AA's* eighth chapter. Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra's *Āloka* identify the semantic antecedent of the term "*hetuḥ*" in *AA* vs. 9.2 as "*prayogaḥ*," while Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* appears to identify it as "*viṣayaḥ*."[43]

More important for us is the fact that *AA* verse 9.2 identifies the entire subject matter of chapter 8 as "*phalaṃ*," the result of the practice, expressed by two terms: "*dharmakāya karma*", where these terms clearly refer to the whole state of buddhahood (including all *kāyas*) together with its activity. This is very important toward the interpretation of *AA* chapter 8, since *AA* 1.17, the table of contents for chapter 8, contains almost the same expression ("*dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraḥ*").

Ārya Vimuktisena's and Haribhadra's analyses of *AA* chapter 8 will be discussed in further detail in later chapters. A brief summary has been presented here so that the reader may have an overview of the contents of *AA* chapter 8 and related verses, together with a basic understanding of the way in which those contents gave rise to later controversies.

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43 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 100-5-4 to 100-5-5; *Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 992; *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, p. 301 (in Tibetan), Amano, 1983, p. 15 (in Sanskrit). Amano 1975, p. 300 reconstructs the Sanskrit for the *Sphuṭārthā's* comments on *AA* 9.2 based on the *Āloka*. Amano 1983 (p. 15) presents the *Sphuṭārthā's* own Sanskrit which corresponds to the Tibetan translation in Amano 1975, p. 301.

# CHAPTER VII

# HISTORICAL-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA CHAPTER 8: AA 8 AS A MAPPING OF THE THREE YOGĀCĀRA KĀYAS ONTO THE LARGE PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRA

## 1. Introduction

As we have noted, the explicit theme of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* (abbreviated "*PP*") was the emptiness of all phenomena (*sarvadharmaśūnyatā*) and the direct realization of that emptiness (*prajñāpāramitā*), explicated in the famous commentaries of Nāgārjuna, while the implicit theme of these *sūtras* was the meditative practices and yogic realizations known as "paths" (*mārgāḥ*) through which Buddhist practitioners were understood to attain enlightenment. The latter, implicit theme of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* was the subject matter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (abbreviated "*AA*"), which explicated that theme by relating the textual passages of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* to the schema of the paths, as those schema were understood at the time of the *AA*'s composition.

Some of the path schema were expressed directly in the Large *PP sūtra* itself, as that *sūtra* drew upon ideas from earlier *sūtra* and proto-Abhidharma sources. There are *PP* passages, for example, which clearly explain the "five eyes"(*pañcacakṣuh)* and "six superknowledges" (*ṣaḍabhijña*) (Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 76-82); and these form the textual basis for their mention in *AA* verse 1.22 amongst the subtopics of "*avavāda*" ("instruction", the second topic of *AA* chapter 1; Amano, 1975, p. 26).

There are significant portions of the *AA*, however, which superimpose a path system scheme onto *PP sūtra* passages which do not have any such order themselves. *AA* chapterl, topic 4 (verses 1.37-1.39), for example, identifies the "*gotra*" as the support for thirteen different elements in the bodhisattva's path. But these elements are not mentioned in the corresponding *PP* passage, and could only be read into it in the most artificial way.[1] The *AA*, then, sometimes makes explicit what is already expressed in the Large *PP sūtra*, and other times superimposes path schema onto the *PP* which were known and accepted at the time of the *AA*'s composition, but were either not yet developed, or not yet widely accepted, at the earlier time of the *PP sūtra's* composition. *AA*'s chapter 8, concerning the final result of the Mahāyāna path, performs both of these functions: it matches the Yogācāra theory of multiple *buddhakāyas*

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[1] Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp.117 ff. The correspondence between *AA* chapter 1, topic 4 (*gotra*) and the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* is established by Ārya Vimuktisena in his *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 28-2-8 to 29-5-5. In fact, the correspondences between all 70 topics of the *AA* and the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* were apparently first worked out by Ārya Vimuktisena, based upon whose work, in all probability, the revised 25,000 *PP sūtra* was redacted (see below).

(which was extrinsic to the *PP*) to the *PP*'s most common expressions of buddhahood (the undefiled dharmas, *dharmakāya*, the 32 marks and 80 signs of the *mahāpuruṣa*, etc.).

Before analyzing *AA* chapter 8's relation to the *PP*, however, the textual history of the *PP* must be investigated, with special reference to those *PP* passages which most probably served as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 8.

## 2. Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8's Textual Basis in the 25,000 Verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra

### 2.A. Late Indian and Tibetan Commentators Identify rP Passages VIII 1-VIII 3 as the Textual Basis of AA chapter 8's Teaching on the Buddhakāyas

The earliest extant commentaries on the *AA* are Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* (ca. early 6th century CE) and Bhadanta Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkārakārikā-vārttika* (6th or 7th century CE).[2] Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary was of fundamental importance for all the centuries of commentary that followed in India and Tibet, for his was the first to establish the textual basis within the 25,000 verse *PP*

[2] Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 86, 101.

*sūtra* for each portion of the *AA*. In fact, his own explications are generally brief, the primary purpose of his commentary being to establish the precise textual correspondence between the passages of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* and the seventy topics of the *AA* which comprise its eight substantive chapters. Bhadanta Vimuktisena's commentary, for the most part, is just a repetition of Ārya Vimuktisena's correlations and comments. It is Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* which established the textual foundation for 1400 years of commentary and discussion on the *AA* in the Indo-Tibetan tradition, even up to the present day.

The earliest extant commentaries on the *AA*, then, related the *AA* to the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* alone. In the late eighth century, more than two hundred years after Ārya Vimuktisena, Haribhadra wrote his famous *AA Āloka*, which related the *AA* for the first time to the 8,000 verse *PP sūtra*. Indian commentators after Haribhadra delineated the *AA*'s relation not only to the 25,000 and 8,000 verse *PP*, but also to the 100,000 verse *PP*, the 18,000 verse *PP*, and to the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcaya-gāthā* (an abbreviated version of the 8,000 *PP*).[3]

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[3] The twenty-one extant Indian commentaries on the *AA* are:

The 12 commentaries which relate the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* directly to different versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*:

1. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitopadeśa-śāstra-Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* by Ārya Vimuktisena (extant in Sanskrit, the first chapter of which is edited in Pensa's edition, Pk 5185 in the Tibetan canon) which relates the *AA* to the 25,000 *PP*

2. *Abhisamayālaṃkārakārikā-vārttika* by Bhadanta Vimuktisena (Pk 5186) which relates the *AA* to the 25,000 *PP*

3. the revised version of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, abbreviated *rP* below (Tib. "*Leu brgyad ma*") ascribed to Haribhadra in the colophon of the Tibetan translation (a version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* in which the subject and topic

Conze's research on the *PP* literature has shown that the 25,000 *PP*, the100,000 *PP*, and the 18,000 *PP* are all different versions of one sūtra, which he calls the "Large *Prajñāpāramitā*" or "The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom". These three versions of the Large *PP sūtra*, for the most part, differ only to the degree to which they repeat the same *PP* formulas declaring the emptiness of all phenomena (Conze, *PP*

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names of the *AA* have been inserted above corresponding sections of the sūtra. Extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan, Pk 5188. This text will be discussed at length below).

4. *Śuddhamatī* by Ratnākaraśānti (Pk 5199) which relates the *AA* to the 25,000 *PP*

5. *Śatasāhasrikā-vivaraṇa* by Dharmaśrī (Pk 5203) which relates the *AA* to the 100,000 *PP*

6. *Abhisamayālaṃkārāloka* by Haribhadra (Sanskrit edition by Wogihara, Tucci, Pk 5189) which relates the *AA* to the 8,000 *PP*

7. *Sārattamā* by Ratnākaraśānti (Sanskrit edition by Jaini, Pk 5200) which relates the *AA* to the 8,000 *PP*

8. *Marmakaumudī* by Abhayākaragupta (Pk 5202) which relates the *AA* to the 8,000 *PP*

9. *Saṃcaya-gāthā-pañjikā Subhodinī* by Haribhadra (Pk 5190) which relates the *AA* to the *Saṃcaya*

10. *Saṃcaya-gāthā-pañjikā* by Buddhajñāna(pāda) (Pk 5196) which relates the *AA* to the *Saṃcaya*

11. *Prajñāpāramitā-kośa-tāla* by Dharmaśrī (Pk 5204) which relates the *AA* to the *Saṃcaya*

12. *Aṣṭa-samāna-artha-śāsana* by Smṛtijñānakīrti (Pk 5187) which relates the *AA* to the 100,000, the 25,000 and the 18,000 *PP*.

The 9 commentaries which explicate the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* independently, without specifically correlating it to any of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* :

1. *Sphuṭārthā* by Haribhadra (Sanskrit edition reconstructed by Amano based on *Āloka* and Tibetan (1975), recent partial Sanskrit manuscript published by Amano (1983-87), Pk 5191)

2. *Prasphuṭapadā* by Dharmamitra (Pk 5194)

3. *Durbodha-āloka* by Dharmakīrtiśrī (Pk 5192)

4. *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti-piṇḍārtha* by Prajñākaramati (Pk 5193)

5. *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha* by Kumāriśrībhadra (Pk 5195)

6. *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārthapradīpa* by Atīśa (Pk 5201)

7. *Prajñā-pradīpa-āvalī* by Buddhaśrījñāna (Pk 5198)

8. *Kīrtikalā* by Ratnakīrti (Pk 5197)

9. *Munimatālaṃkāra* by Abhayākaragupta (the third chapter of this work concerns the eight *abhisamayas* of the *AA*, Pk 5299).

See Obermiller, "The Doctrine of *Prajñāpāramitā*," pp. 9-11; Conze, *PP Literature*, pp. 33, 36, 50,51,55,112-115.

*Literature*, p.10). Conze noted that this Large *PP* sūtra (in any of its three versions), when divided into three parts, can be related to the 8,000 *PP*, which he believed to be the oldest *PP* sūtra. The Large *PP's* first part is an expansion of the 8,000 *PP's* first chapter. The Large *PP's* second part closely follows chapters 2 - 28 of the 8,000 *PP*, usually expanding the text, sometimes abbreviating it. The third part of the Large sūtra is independent of the 8,000 *PP* (*PP Lit.* pp. 32-33).

If we are to choose from among all *PP* sūtras known to us, it is the Large *PP* sūtra, especially in its 25,000 verse version, which most likely served as textual basis for the *AA*. There are two principal reasons for claiming this: First, upon analysis, the 8,000 *PP* sūtra does not provide an adequate textual basis for the last three and a half chapters of the *AA*, while the Large *PP* sūtra does. This is because it is the third part of the Large *PP* sūtra which serves as that textual basis, a part of the Large sūtra which is not part of the 8,000 *PP* sūtra. Thus, only the Large *PP* could have been the textual basis for the *AA* in its entirety. Secondly, as far as we know, in the earliest centuries of commentary on the *AA*, the 25,000 *PP* was the only *PP* sūtra identified by classical Indian scholars as the AA's textual basis. It took more than two hundred years before any other *PP* sūtra (the 8,000 *PP*) was so identified. It should also be noted that more Indian commentaries relate the *AA* to the 25,000 verse version of the *PP* sūtra than any other version of the Large *PP* sūtra.

From amongst all the *PP* sūtras, it is the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* which Ārya Vimuktisena identified as the textual basis for the *AA*, and he did so carefully and convincingly, by quoting from or paraphrasing from all of

the *sūtra* passages which correlated with each of the *AA*'s 70 topics. As far as we know, no other textual basis for the *AA* was assumed prior to or during his time. The influence of Ārya Vimuktisena on the work of all later *AA* scholars can not be overemphasized, as he established the basic pattern of relationships between the *AA* and the *PP* to which all the scholars who came after him referred, even when they later attempted to establish relationships between the *AA* and *PP* sūtras other than the 25,000 verse version. It must also be noted in this regard that among all the *PP* sūtras, it is only the 25,000 *PP* into which the topic titles of the *AA* were inserted, resulting in a revised recension of the sūtra showing its connection to the *AA* passage for passage (this special revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* will be discussed below).

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* association with the 8,000 verse *PP* has become particularly renowned in traditional and modern scholarship through the work of Haribhadra (late 8th century CE) whose *Āloka* first made that association. But it is quite clear that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* chapters 6,7 and 8 were written as commentary on corresponding portions of the Large *PP sūtra*, particularly its 25,000 verse version, *not* as commentary on the 8,000 *PP*. Conze has shown that the Large *PP* (including its versions in 100,000, 25,000, and 18,000 verses) corresponds closely to the 8,000 *PP* up to the 8000 *PP*'s chapter 28. According to Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra, this would correspond to the middle of *AA* chapter 5 (*PP Literature*, p. 44). Beyond that point, the Large *PP* continues to serve as a reasonable textual basis for the rest of *AA*'s chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. But the portion of the 8,000 *PP* taken as

textual basis for the *AA* comes to an end very abruptly after its 28th chapter, forcing Haribhadra in his *Āloka* to identify just one verse of that sūtra as the textual basis for all of *AA* chapter 6, just one more verse as the basis for all of *AA* chapter 7, and a very brief passage (which obviously has little or no relation to *AA* chapter 8) as the basis for *AA* chapter 8.

Even a brief glance at Ārya Vimuktisena's *Vṛtti*, which shows the correspondence between the *AA* and the 25,000 *PP*, is sufficient to see that the relevant portions of the 25,000 *PP* are extensive enough and correspond well enough to the concepts expressed in the corresponding portions of the *AA* to have easily served as the textual basis for *AA* chapters 6, 7, and 8. The corresponding sūtra passages identified by Ārya Vimuktisena take up over one hundred pages in English translation (Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 549-656, Amano, 1975 pp. 252-297). But the portion of the 8,000 *PP* which Haribhadra's *Āloka* identifies as the textual basis for all of *AA* chapters 6, 7, and 8 is not even remotely related to them conceptually, and is far too brief. It takes up less than one page of English translation (Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, pp. 175-176). This forces Haribhadra to give long independent explanations of *AA* chapters 6, 7, and 8 with only cursory reference to the 8,000 *PP* sūtra to which they are supposed to have correspondence.[4]

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[4] For the *PP* textual basis of AA chapters 6-8 identified in the revised 25,000 *PP*, see the Sanskrit of that sūtra in Conze's *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, chapters VI through VIII. This can be compared to the same sections of the Tibetan translations of the unrevised and revised 25,000 *PP*, Pk 731 p.122-3-2 ff. and Pk 5188 p.279-4-4 ff. respectively. These texts are very close to the corresponding text of the Gilgit Sanskrit 18,000 *PP*, which, in the portions corresponding to *AA* chapters 6-8, is translated into English in

To illustrate the point, we can compare the 25,000 *PP* passages which Ārya Vimuktisena identified as textual basis for *AA* chapter 6 in his *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, and the 8,000 *PP* passages which Haribhadra identified in his *Āloka*. *AA* chapter 6's subject matter is the *anupūrvābhisamaya*, "the progressive realization". This refers to the progressive or gradual realization of all the aspects of the three types of knowledge which form the subject matter of *AA*'s first three chapters (*sarvākārajñatā*, *mārgākārajñatā*, and *sarvajñatā*). The *anupūrvābhisamaya* (progressive realization) is divided into thirteen types: the six *pāramitās*, the six types of recollection, and lastly, the realization of the non-substantiality of all dharmas. *AA* chapter 6 consists of just one verse; but that single verse refers to all thirteen types of progressive realization.[5] We would expect the portion of the *PP* sūtra which served as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 6 to discuss, or at least to mention, those thirteen types of realization.

The portion of the 25,000 *PP* which Ārya Vimuktisena identified as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 6 does indeed discuss each of the thirteen types of realization, in order and at length.[6] First, Subhuti asks the

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Conze's *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 549-656. The textual basis in the 8000 *PP* for *AA* chapters 6, 7, and 8 (as specified by Haribhadra) is less than one page of Conze's English translation of that sūtra. See Conze's *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, pp. 275-276, beginning: "One should approach the resounding declarations of the perfection of wisdom through the [analogy of the] roaring of the lion's roar." The same 8,000 *PP* passages are found in Haribhadra's *Āloka*, Wogihara's Sanskrit edition, pp. 908-926, beginning: "*siṃha nāda nadanatayā prajñāpāramitā nadanatā 'nugantavyā.*".

5 Amano, 1975, p. 252.

6 Sanskrit of revised 25,000 *PP* in Conze's *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, sections VI 1-13. Ārya Vimuktisena's *Vṛtti*, Pk 5185, p. 90-4-7 ff. For the same passages in the 18,000 *PP*, Conze's *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 549-556 gives the English translation, and Conze's *Gilgit Manuscript*, pp. 1-10 gives the Sanskrit.

Buddha to explain how the bodhisattva can be understood to progressively realize full enlightenment. The Buddha explains the progressive training of the bodhisattva through his perfections of giving, morality, patience, energy, concentration and wisdom (the six *pāramitās*). He then explains the bodhisattva's progressive training through his recollections of *Buddha*, *dharma*, *saṃgha*, moral conduct, renunciation, and the deities (the six recollections, "*anusmṛti*," being: *buddha*, *dharma* and *saṃgha anusmṛti*, *śīla anusmṛti*, *tyāga anusmṛti*, and *devatā anusmṛti*). Finally he explains the bodhisattva's thirteenth progressive training and realization: his gnosis of the non-substantial nature of all dharmas (*sarvadharmābhāvasvabhāva jñāna*). AA chapter 6 consists of one verse which lists those thirteen progressive realizations:

> "*dānena prajñayā yāvad buddhādau smṛtibhiścal dharmābhāvasvabhāvenetyanupūrvakriyā matā//.*" *AA* 6.1.

The *AA's* term "*anupūrvakriyā*" here is precisely the term used in the sūtra passage summarized above. It literally means "progressive activity". It was indeed reasonable to identify, as Ārya Vimuktisena did, the 25,000 *PP* passage above as the textual basis for that *AA* verse.

The 8,000 *PP* passage which Haribhadra's *Āloka* identifies as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 6 is only the following verse: "*siṃha nāda nadanatayā prajñāpāramitā nadanatā 'nugantavyā//*" (Wogihara, p. 908). Conze translates this: "One should approach the resounding declaration of the perfection of wisdom through the [analogy of the] roaring of the

lion's roar" (*The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, p.275). Haribhadra identifies that single, metaphorical verse as the entire textual basis in the 8,000 *PP* for AA chapter 6. The verse makes no mention of thirteen progressive realizations. The word "progressive", "*anupūrva*," does not even appear in it. There is no organic relationship whatsoever between this verse and *AA* chapter 6. Wisely, Haribhadra makes no attempt to expose one. He just identifies this verse as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 6, and then goes on to explain that chapter of the *AA* entirely independently of it (Wogihara, p. 908).

Like *AA* chapter 6, *AA* chapters 7 and 8 are closely related to the corresponding sections of the 25,000 *PP* as identified by Ārya Vimuktisena, and totally unrelated to the sections of the 8,000 *PP* identified by Haribhadra. If we are to choose from *PP* sūtras known to us, we can only conclude that the *AA*'s last three chapters were originally written as commentary on the Large *PP* sūtra (most probably its version in 25,000 verses) and not on the 8,000 *PP* sūtra.

There is a special revised version of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* which is extant in Sanskrit and, in its Tibetan translation, is ascribed to Haribhadra as redactor (Conze *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 36-40; Conze's typescript romanization of the Sanskrit is his *Mahāprajñāpāramita Sūtra*; Dutt's edition of the Sanskrit is his *The Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Edited with Critical Notes and Introduction*, 1934; the Tibetan translation is Pk 5188 in the *bsTan 'gyur* of the Tibetan canon). Conze calls this the "recast version of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*," or "the version in 25,000

lines which has been adjusted to conform to the divisions of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*." It is a revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* which, I am certain, was redacted some time after Ārya Vimuktisena, because it reflects precisely the correspondences he drew between the *PP sūtra* and the *AA* (and for numerous other reasons presented below). In this revised version of the sūtra, each sūtra passage is labelled with the name of the *AA* topic or sub-topic for which that portion of sūtra was thought to be the textual basis. Apart from the insertion of *AA* topic and sub-topic titles into the sūtra after their corresponding passages, there is no commentary or explication. The textual material is all in the style characteristic of *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, with disciples questioning the Bhagavat (the Buddha) and receiving answers. I shall refer to this special redaction of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* as "the revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*," and shall abbreviate it "*rP*."

Although the revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* (*rP*), redacted in a form for easy cross-reference between the *sūtra* and the AA, contains no actual commentary or exegisis, it is included in the Tibetan canon within the *bsTan 'gyur* (collection of commentaries) rather than within the *bKa' 'gyur* (collection of *sūtras*), as if it were a commentary (*śāstra*). This is a bit strange, because, as noted above, *rP* gives the appearance of being just a *sūtra* and contains no commentary except for the insertion of *AA* topic titles after corresponding passages. Furthermore, late Indian and all major Tibetan *AA* commentators quote *rP* as their reference for the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, considering it and referring to it as the Large *PP sūtra*, not as a commentary on that *sūtra* (this will be discussed below). *rP* was

used in the commentarial tradition of late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism as a ready reference version of the 25,000 *PP* sūtra, the version in which passages corresponding to particular topics of the *AA* were easy to find.

Bu ston (1290-1364 CE), the first compiler of the Tibetan canon, may have grouped *rP* with the commentaries (*śāstras*) in the *bsTan 'gyur* because *rP* obviously had a redactor who inserted the *AA* topic titles into the *sūtra* (the redactor is not mentioned in the Sanskrit manuscripts, but is identified in the colophon of the Tibetan translation as Haribhadra). Bu ston may have considered this enough to preclude classifying the text with *sūtras* in the bKa' 'gyur, since *sūtras* were traditionally understood to be the word of the Buddha taken verbatim and without redaction. There is another, unrevised version of the same 25,000 *PP sūtra* in the *bKa' 'gyur* of the Tibetan canon (Pk 731). The texts of the unrevised version and the revised version (*rP*) of the 25,000 *PP* sūtra are generally close in content. However, there are a few of places in the revised version (*rP*) where the *sūtra* has been altered, generally by addition or transposition of passages, evidently in order to make it conform a little better to the structure of the *AA*.[7]

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[7] Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 37-39; Lethcoe, "Some Notes on the Relationship between the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the Revised *Pañcaviṃśatisahāsrikā*, and the Chinese Translation of the Unrevised *Pañcaviṃśatisahāsrikā*," JAOS 96, 1976, pp. 499-511.

For a description of all extant *PP sūtras*, see Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 31-74. The revised 25,000 *PP* (*rP*) is extant in 18th and 19th century Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts, edited in Dutt, *The Pañcaviṃśatisahāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, and Conze, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, and is also extant in Tibetan translation in the Tibetan canon (Pk 5188). Nancy Lethcoe, using Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, has charted the development of this *sūtra* over a period of several centuries and has clearly shown that its revised version (*rP*), extant only in Sanskrit and Tibetan, lies within that continuum of development. She noted that it is a late version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*,

As noted above, the 25,000 *PP* is the version of the Large *PP* sūtra upon which the *AA* was probably based, and in its revised version (*rP*), each sūtra passage bears the name of the *AA* section to which it was thought to correspond. *rP* is divided into eight chapters which correspond to and bear the names of the *AA*'s eight chapters. *rP's* eighth chapter, called "*dharmakāya-abhisamaya,*" is divided into five sections which are labelled as the textual bases for five corresponding sections of *AA* chapter 8. *rP* chapter 8's first section (*rP* VIII 1.) is labelled "*svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ.*" Its second section (*rP* VIII 2) is labelled "*sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ.*" Its third section (*rP* VIII 3) is labelled "*nairmāṇikaḥ kāyaḥ.*" Its fourth section (*rP* VIII 4) is labelled "*sāmānyena nirmāṇakāyadvārena dharmakāyasya karma*" ("the activity of the *dharmakāya* in general by means of the *nairmāṇikakāya*"). And its fifth section (*rP* VIII 5) is labelled "*karmāni.*"[8] For convenience, I am numbering sections of the Large *PP sūtra* with the numbering system employed by Conze in his editions of the Large *PP sūtra* in Sanskrit and English translation (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* sections VIII 1-VIII 5, *Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom* pp. 572-643 and 653-4, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* pp. 164-243). *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII

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revised by the insertion of *AA* topic names, and less obviously, by occasional transpositions and additions which bring the *sūtra* more closely into line with the *AA* (Lethcoe, "Some Notes," pp. 499-511).

8 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, chapter 8, sections VIII 1-VIII 5; in Tibetan translation, Pk 5188, Vol. 88: *rP* VIII 1 is labelled at folio 3-5-1 "*ngo bo nyid sku;*" *rP* VIII 2 is labelled at 3-5-5 "*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku;*" *rP* VIII 3 is labelled at 3-5-8 "*sprul pa'i sku;*" *rP* VIII 4 is labelled at 6-2-2 "*sprul pa'i sku'i sgo nas chos kyi sku'i phrin las spyir bstan pa;*" Vol. 90, *rP* VIII 5 is labelled at 61-2-2 "*phrin las rnams;*" and the title for *rP* chapter 8 [corresponding to *AA* chapter 8] is labelled at 61-2-2 "*chos kyi sku'i mngon par rtogs pa.*"

5 inclusive are found in *all* extant editions of *rP* in Sanskrit manuscript and in Tibetan translation.

The revised 25,000 *PP* (*rP*) plays a most important role in late Indian *PP* literature and in the major *PP* commentaries of Tibet. In India, Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE) and Abhayākaragupta (early 12th century) quoted its passages to identify the *PP* textual basis for the *AA*.[9] Later, the most influential *PP* commentators in Tibet, such as Bu ston rin chen grub (1290-1364 CE), gYag ston sangs rgyas dpal (ca.1350-1414), Rong ston smra ba'i seng ge (1367-1449), Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419), rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen (1364-1432) and Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge (1429-1489) cited *rP* passages as the textual bases for each *AA* section they commented upon. Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta and the major Tibetan scholars identified *rP* chapter 8 as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 8, and *rP* sections VIII 1-VIII 3 as the primary textual basis for *AA* chapter 8's explanation of the *buddhakāyas* (*AA* 8 verses 1-33).

Special note should be taken of the fact that when Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta quoted the *PP* textual basis for *AA* chapter 8's teaching on the *buddhakāyas* , they wrote "*uktam mahatyorbhagavatyoḥ*" (in

[9] Ratnākaraśānti's *Śuddhamati*, Pk 5199, 281-5-2 ff. and *Sāratamā*, Pk 5200, 92-4-4 ff., Jaini's Sanskrit edition, p. 172; Abhayākaragupta's *Marmakaumudi*, Pk 5202, 198-5-6ff. and *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, 232-1-3ff. Dharmamitra and Dharmakīrtiśrī of Suvarnadvīpa, for the most part, did not quote the *PP sūtra* in their *AA* commentaries, because their texts are sub-commentaries on Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, which comments on the *AA* independently of correlation to any particular *PP* sūtra. Dharmamitra and Dharmakīrtiśrī probably also assumed that their readers were familiar with Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary and/or *rP*. In their comments on *AA* chapter 8, Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta quote the *PP sūtra*, and in particular, *rP*, in order to show the *sūtra* basis for their disagreement with Haribhadra over the meaning of the *AA*.

Tibetan translation "*bcom ldan 'das ma chen mo dag du gsungs pa*") meaning "as it was said in the two large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*: ..." (literally: "As it was said in the two great *Bhagavatīs*"). By this they meant that the quote they were giving was to be found in the large versions of the *PP sūtra*, presumably the two largest versions, the100,000 *PP* and the 25,000 *PP*. But the quote which they then provided was a quote taken specifically from the *revised* version of the 25,000 *PP*, *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3.[10] It appears that Indian *Prajñāpāramitā* scholars, by the time of Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE), and perhaps somewhat earlier, found the revised 25,000 *PP sūtra* (*rP*) the most convenient version of the *sūtra* to use when commenting on the *AA*, since only this version of the *sūtra* had its passages marked with the *AA's* topic names for ready reference. The Tibetan commentators followed the Indians in using *rP* as their ready reference version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*. Tibetan scholars, before quoting the textual basis for the *AA* chapter 8's *kāya* teaching, said: "*mdo las*", meaning "from the [*PP*] *sūtra*". This, too, meant that they understood their quote to be found in the *PP* sūtras in general, at least in the Large *PP* versions. But the actual quote they gave was taken only from the revised 25,000 *PP*, *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3.[11]

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[10] Ratnākaraśānti's *Śuddhamati*, Pk 5199, 281-5-2 ff. and *Sāratamā*, Pk 5200, 92-4-4 ff., Jaini's Sanskrit edition, p. 172; Abhayākaragupta's *Marmakaumudi*, Pk 5202, 198-5-6ff. and *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, 232-1-3ff.

[11] Bu ston's *Lung gi snye ma*, vol. 2, p.204 ff.; gYag ston's *Rin po che'i phreng ba blo gsal mgul rgyan*, vol.4, p. 382 ff.; Rong ston's *Tshig don rab gsal*, 554-1 ff.; Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad gser phreng*, vol. 2, 465-4 ff.; rGyal tshab's *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan*, p. 549 ff, Sera rje btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan's *Chos sku spyi don*, 14b3 to 15b7. *rP* VIII 1.- VIII 3. comprises sections VIII 1.-VIII 3. of Conze's *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*; in Tibetan translation: Pk 5188, 3-4-1 to 3-5-8.

*rP*, then, was used in the commentarial tradition of late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism as a ready reference version of the 25,000 *PP* sūtra, the version in which passages corresponding to particular topics of the *AA* were easy to find. Because they relied so heavily on *rP* as their textual source for *AA* chapter 8 in this way, Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta, and all the Tibetan *PP* scholars I am aware of thought that passages VIII 1-VIII 3 of *rP* were the *PP* textual bases for the *AA*'s teaching on the *buddhakāyas* (*AA* 8 verses 1-33). Quoting *rP* as *sūtra*, they accepted it as an authoritative edition of the *PP sūtra* (altered only by the insertion of *AA* topic names for easy reference). As traditional Buddhist scholars, they assumed that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, like all other *PP* sūtra passages which were accepted as authoritative, were the words of the Buddha, and were therefore to be found generally in the major recensions of the Large *PP* sūtra which preserved those words.

*rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 are translated below. The Tibetan translation in the *bsTan 'gyur* (Pk 5188) differs slightly from the Sanskrit manuscripts, but not in ways which affect the discussion here. I translate here from the Sanskrit.[12] In the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 the names of the three *kāyas* ("*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," "*nairmāṇikakāya*") are presented as the titles of their respective *sūtra* passages, just as presented here:[13]

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12 Sanskrit of *rP* VIII 1.-VIII 3: *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, sections VIII 1.-VIII 3.; Tibetan: Pk 5188, 3-4-1 to 3-5-8; Compare Conze's English translation: *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp.653-654.

13 The titles: "*svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ*," "*sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ*," and "*nairmāṇikaḥ kāyaḥ*" appear in the revised 25,000 *PP* as the titles of their respective passages (Conze, *Mahā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, fols. P523a8-523b5). Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta

*rP* VIII 1:

*Svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ*

Moreover, Śubhuti, of all the undefiled [Buddha] dharmas, which are like a dream, which are non-entities, whose self-existence (*svabhāva*) is non-existent, which are empty of self-characterization (*svalakṣaṇaśūnya*), which are fully purified through omniscient knowledge, of them the innate nature (*prakṛti*), which has only one characteristic, i.e. no characteristic, is to be known as the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One. It is thus that the bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.

*Subhuti:* What again, Blessed One (*Bhagavat*), are all the undefiled [Buddha] dharmas?

*The Blessed One:* The thirty-seven factors which foster enlightenment, the four measureless thoughts, the eight liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the six supernatural knowledges, the four analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which a Buddha has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion, the eighteen qualities unique to a Buddha, total omniscience, path knowledge and all knowledge: these are indeed, Subhuti, all the undefiled [Buddha] dharmas It is thus, Subhuti, that the bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.[14]

quoted these passages as the *PP* textual basis for *AA* 8, and as evidence that the *AA* teaches three Buddha *kāyas* (*Sārattamā*, Jaini, ed., p. 172; *Marmakaumudi*, Pk 5202, 198-5-6 - 199-1-1).

[14] Compare this passage of *rP* to *AA* verses 8.1-8.6 as translated in chapter six of this thesis. The correspondence is clear. It is no surprise that late Indian and Tibetan commentators identified *rP* VIII 1. as the textual basis for *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6. The same observation holds true for *rP* VIII 2 and VIII 3 and their corresponding verses in the *AA* (vss. 8.12 and 8.33 on *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively).

*rP* VIII 2:

*Sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ*

Moreover, Subhuti, when he has trained in perfect wisdom, when by the full attainment of just these dharmas he has realized highest complete enlightenment, his body always and everywhere entirely adorned with the thirty-two marks of the great being (*mahāpuruṣa*) and the eighty associated signs, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened one demonstrates for the bodhisattvas, the great beings, the supreme Mahāyāna dharma in order to bring them (*āvahāya*) unsurpassed pleasure and satisfaction, joy and happiness. It is thus that the bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.[15]

*rP* VIII 3:

*Nairmāṇikaḥ kāyaḥ*

Moreover, Subhuti, when he has trained in perfect wisdom, when by the full attainment of just these dharmas he has realized highest, complete enlightenment, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One, in endless and limitless world systems in the ten directions, during the whole of time, by means of a cloud of multi-form emanations (*nirmāṇameghena*), carries out the benefit of all beings. It is thus that the bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.[16]

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15 Tibetan, Pk 5188, 3-5-2 to 3-5-5, reads a little differently: "... the body of the Tathāgatas, Arhats, fully enlightened Buddhas always and everywhere adorned with the thirty-two marks of the great being and the eighty associated signs, demonstrates to the bodhisattvas, the great beings, pleasure and satisfaction, joy and happiness in the unsurpassed enjoyment of the supreme Mahāyāna dharma". Compare to *Sāratamā*, Jaini's Sanskrit edition, p.172.

16 Tibetan, Pk 5188, 3-5-6 to 3-5-8, says: "when, ..., he has realized highest, complete enlightenment, he carries out the benefit of all beings by means of a cloud of multi-form emanations of the body of the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One, in the ten directions, in endless and boundless world systems, during the whole of time." This could be rephrased: "when, ..., he has realized highest, complete enlightenment, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One carries out the benefit of all beings by means of a cloud of multi-form emanations of his body, in the ten directions, in endless and boundless world systems, during the whole of time."

Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta, and the major *PP* commentators of Tibet believed that *AA* chapter 8, which teaches the multiple Buddha *kāyas*, constituted a commentary on *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 quoted above. Therefore, they reasoned, the number of *kāyas* taught in *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 must be the number taught in the *AA*.

Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta, and, in Tibet, Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge backed Ārya Vimuktisena's claim that the *AA* taught 3 *kāyas*. In part, this was because they believed that *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 clearly taught 3 *kāyas*.[17] And looking at the passages above, it is easy to appreciate their perspective. The innate nature of the perfectly pure dharmas would be the first *kāya*, *svābhāvikakāya*. The Buddha manifesting as an exalted figure who shares the enjoyment of the dharma with the bodhisattvas and who bears the marks and signs would be the second *kāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*. And the Buddha's extensive emanations would comprise the third *kāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*. In addition, the redactor of *rP* inserted the names of the 3 *kāyas* as the titles for the passages (precisely as presented above).

Furthermore, there is a clear relation between the key terms within the three *sūtra* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 and the names of the 3 *kāyas*. In *rP* VIII 1, the key term is "*prakṛti*", which I translate "innate nature." This term is often synonomous in Buddhist philosophical Sanskrit with "*svabhāva*" ("essence," "self-existence," "own-being") the adjectival form

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[17] Ratnākaraśānti in *Śuddhamati* and *Sārattamā*, Abhayākaragupta in *Munimatālaṃkāra* and *Marmakaumudi*, Go ram pa bsod nams senge ge in *sBas don zab mo'i gter*.

of which forms the name "*svābhāvikaḥ kāyaḥ*" ("the Body in its Essence," or "Essence Body"). In *rP* VIII 2., there are numerous terms for enjoyment, which is the basic meaning of "sāmbhogikaḥ" in "*sāmbhogikaḥ kāyaḥ*" ("the Body in its Shared Enjoyment," or "Shared Enjoyment Body"). And in *rP* VIII 3, the agent of benefit to beings is the cloud of emanations (*nirmāṇa*). "Emanation," "*nirmāṇa*," being the term which, in taddhita form, gives the name "*nairmāṇikaḥ kāyaḥ*" ("the Body as Emanation," or "Emanation Body"). *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, then, do give the appearance of providing a clear basis within the *PP sūtra* for interpreting *AA* chapter 8 as teaching 3 *kāyas*.

Haribhadra, however, as discussed in the previous chapter, believed that *AA* chapter 8 taught four *buddhakāyas*. The two commentaries in which Haribhadra set forth his four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* are his *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā*. The former commentary relates the *AA* to the 8000 verse *PP sūtra*, and the latter commentary explicates the *AA* independently, without specific reference to *sūtra*. Neither commentary directly relates the *AA* to the 25,000 *PP sūtra*.

However, it appeared clear to later Tibetan scholars from Haribhadra's comments on *AA* verses 8.1-8.6, which are very close in expression to *rP* passage VIII 1 above, that Haribhadra read two *buddhakāyas* into *rP* passage VIII 1.[18] Therefore, the major commentators in Tibet believed Haribhadra found textual support for his theory of four *buddhakāyas* in

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[18] For Haribhadra's reading of *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 according to the *Sphuṭārthā* and *Āloka*, see Amano, 1975, pp. 262-270; Wogihara, pp. 914-917.

*rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3.[19] According to the Tibetan commentators, Haribhadra agreed with Ārya Vimuktisena that *rP* VIII 2 and VIII 3 taught the *sāmbhogikakāya* and the *nairmāṇikakāya*, but he believed that *rP* VIII 1, divided into two parts, was to be read as teaching *two* other *kāyas*: the *svābhāvikakāya* and the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* (the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis, the gnosis of Buddha as a conventional entity, which Haribhadra distinguished from the *svābhāvikakāya*, the ultimate, empty nature of that gnosis). According to this scheme, the first paragraph of *rP* VIII 1 is understood to be teaching the *svābhāvikakāya* , and the rest of *rP* VIII 1 is understood to be teaching the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, as follows (I label the two parts of *rP* VIII 1, corresponding to Haribhadra's *svābhāvikakāya* and *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, "*rP* 8.1a" and "*rP* 8.1b" respectively):

*rP* VIII 1a- *The PP Passage Expressing Svābhāvikakāya in Haribhadra's Interpretation* (according to Tibetan commentators):

> Moreover, Subhuti, of all the undefiled [Buddha] dharmas, which are like a dream, which are non-entities, whose self-existence (*svabhāva*) is non-existent, which are empty of self-characterization (*svalakṣaṇaśūnya*), which are fully purified through omniscient knowledge, of them the innate nature (*prakṛti*), which has only one characteristic, i.e. no characteristic, is to be known as the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the fully Enlightened One. It is thus that the bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.

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19 Bu ston's *Lung gi snye ma*, vol. 2, p.206 ff.; gYag ston's *Rin po che'i phreng ba blo gsal mgul rgyan*, vol.4, p.387-6 ff.; Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad gser phreng*, vol. 2, 469-5 to 470-4; Sera rje btsun pa's *Chos sku spyi don*, 15a4-15b7.

*rP* VIII 1b- *The PP Passage Expressing Jñānātmaka Dharmakāya in Haribhadra's Interpretation* (according to Tibetan commentators):

> *Subhuti:* What again, Blessed One (*Bhagavat*), are all the undefiled [Buddha] dharmas?
> *The Blessed One:* The thirty-seven factors which foster enlightenment, the four measureless thoughts, the eight liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the six supernatural knowledges, the four analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which a Buddha has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion, the eighteen qualities unique to a Buddha, total omniscience, path knowledge and all knowledge: these are indeed, Subhuti, all the undefiled [Buddha] dharmas. It is thus, Subhuti, that the bodhisattva, the great being, should train in the perfection of wisdom.

Note that the term "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*" is of Haribhadra's making, and is not actually found in *rP*. However, as we see here, *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 can be understood semantically to serve as a textual basis for the *AA*'s teaching four *kāyas*.

The important point is that if one believes *AA* 8's teaching on the *kāyas* to be based on *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, there will be a tendency to see *AA* 8 as teaching at least three, and possibly four *kāyas* as its explication of *rP*. This is because, as we can see clearly in the translations above, *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 unambiguously delineate at least three, and possibly four, distinct *kāyas* by reference to their nature and function.

In what follows, however, we shall demonstrate that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are unique to the revised version of the 25,000 *PP* (as we have it in Sanskrit and Tibetan translation); that these passages are not found in *any* version of the *PP sūtras* other than the revised version of the 25,000 PP, not even in the unrevised 25,000 PP. Taking this, together with important evidence from Chinese editions of the *PP sūtras* and from Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, we will also demonstrate that *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 did not exist at the time the *AA* was composed. In fact, we shall demonstrate that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were inserted into the 25,000 *PP sūtra* some time after Ārya Vimuktisena made his commentary on the *AA* (ca. early 6th century), which was necessarily after the *AA* was composed. This means that *AA* chapter 8 could not have been commenting on *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, and should not be read as if it were. This fact is crucial for evaluating the *AA*'s teaching on the *buddhakāyas*. Because, if, as we shall demonstrate, *AA* chapter 8 did *not* comment upon *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, then its comments are based upon another portion of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*. If we can determine which portion of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* was its actual textual basis, we can better ascertain the meaning of *AA* chapter 8.[20]

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[20] E. Obermiller's groundbreaking study of the *AA* analyzed the *AA* by referring to Haribhadra's *Āloka* and *Sputārthā*, and by relying heavily on several major Tibetan *AA* commentaries (*Analysis of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, 1933, pp. vii-viii). His report that *AA* 8 taught 4 *buddhakāyas* was based on these sources. But the Tibetan commentators upon which he relied (Bu ston, Tsong kha pa, rGyal tshab, 'Jam dbyang bshad pa) all identified revised 25,000 *PP* passages VIII.1 - VIII.3 (quoted above) as the *sūtra* basis for *AA* 8's *buddhakāya* teaching (Bu ston's *Lung gi snye ma*, vol. 2, p.204 ff.; Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad gser phreng*, vol. 2, 465-4 ff.; rGyal tshab's *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan*, p. 549 ff). A number of influential modern scholars since Obermiller have followed his lead, based on similar sources, reporting simply that *AA* 8 teaches 4 *kāyas*

Below, we will present the evidence which indicates that *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 was written after Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary on the *AA* was composed, and therefore necessarily after the composition of the *AA*. This will show that *AA* chapter 8 could not possibly have been explicating *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, as late Indian and Tibetan scholars believed, which will imply that it was explicating a different portion of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*. We will then show how Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary identifies that portion of the *PP* sūtra for us, the portion which was the actual textual basis for *AA* 8. We will briefly examine the content of that portion of *sūtra*. Upon doing so, we will find, surprisingly, that its primary subject matter is not even buddhahood or *buddhakāyas*. Rather, its primary concern is to explain the four methods employed by bodhisattvas for collecting disciples (*catvāri saṃgrahavastūni*), which involves a discussion of Buddha's qualities only as an adjunct matter. We will find that several of the central terms and concepts used in *AA* chapter 8 (such as "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," and "*nairmāṇikakāya*") were never specified in the *PP*. The obvious conclusion is that the author of the *AA* drew these terms and concepts from textual sources within Indian Buddhism other than the *PP*, most probably from sources we

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(Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, p. 103; Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 155; Poussin, *Siddhi*, pp. 790-791; cf. Obermiller, *Analysis of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, pp. 11-12).

In order to arrive at a proper interpretation of *AA* 8, it is important first to identify its actual textual basis in the *PP sūtra*, and then to see how this sheds light on its teaching of the *buddhakāyas*. This is what I will attempt to do in what follows. Because no modern scholar has yet done this, there has been a tendency to repeat what scholars such as Obermiller have said without realizing that the Tibetan sources upon which he relied had mis-identified the *PP sūtra* basis of *AA* 8, and that this has a bearing on the interpretation of *AA* 8.

identified in previous chapters as Yogācāra. And this suggests that the purpose of the *AA*'s author in composing *AA* 8 was to draw a correlation, for the first time in Indian Buddhism, between the Yogācāra descriptions of buddhahood (as *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*) and the descriptions found in the *PP* sūtras (as *dharmakāya*, as a collection of undefiled dharmas, as *rūpakāya* with marks and signs, etc.).

2.B. Evidence that rP Passages VIII 1-VIII 3 Were Composed after the Abhisamayālaṃkāra, and Thus Could Not Have Been the Textual Basis for Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8

2.B.1. rP Passages VIII 1-VIII 3 Are Missing in All Chinese Translations of the 25,000 Verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra

The revised version of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* (*rP*) is extant in Sanskrit, and in Tibetan translation. The Sanskrit manuscripts are18th and 19th century Nepalese, and do not give the compiler's name. The Tibetan translation occasionally departs from the Sanskrit texts. Its colophon names Haribhadra as the compiler. In *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, which particularly concern us here, the Tibetan translation is close to the Sanskrit, departing from it in only minor ways which do not affect our discussion.

The unrevised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* was translated into Chinese four times. The earliest of these translations, by Dharmarakṣa, ca. 286 C.E., is incomplete, covering only the first portions of the sūtra, and therefore need not be considered here. The three other translations cover the 25,000 *PP* in its entirety. These are Mokṣala's in 291 C.E., Kumārajīva's in 403-404 C.E., and Hsuan tsang's in 659-663 C.E. The revised version of this sūtra was never translated into Chinese. Hsuan tsang, although he brought to China many *PP* manuscripts and translated several of them, never even mentioned the revised version of the 25,000 *PP*. This is one indication that it may post-date him.[21]

Nancy Lethcoe, in a 1976 paper,[22] studied the relationships between the *AA*, the revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* in Sanskrit, and the three Chinese translations of the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra*. She wanted to determine to what extent the redactor of the revised version of the 25,000 *PP* sūtra might have altered the *sūtra* in order to make it conform better to the divisions of the *AA*. The Chinese translations all represent versions of the sūtra prior to the revised version. She compared the passages of the three Chinese translations to each other and to the Sanskrit of the revised version. She found that the majority of passages in the Sanskrit revised version(*rP*) also occur in all three Chinese translations, but that a number of its passages are missing in one or more of the Chinese translations. For example, out of 222 sections in *rP*

21 See reference to Lethcoe's paper, next footnote.
22 Nancy R. Lethcoe, "Some Notes on the Relationship Between the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the Revised *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, and the Chinese Translations of the Unrevised *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*," JAOS, 96.4 (1976), 499-511.

corresponding to the first *Abhisamaya* (the first chapter of the *AA*), 37 are missing in one or more of the Chinese translations. The vast majority of sections missing in one or more Chinese translation occur in the first and eighth *Abhisamayas* (corresponding to the first and eighth chapters of the *AA*). Very few are missing in the other six *Abhisamayas*.[23]

Some passages of *rP* missing in the earliest Chinese translation do appear in later Chinese translations. This indicates that they may have been added to the 25,000 *PP* text some time after 291 C.E. (the time of Mokṣala's translation) but before the final redaction of the revised version. Besides such additions, Lethcoe found a number of passages in *rP* which had been transposed from other parts of the unrevised *PP* in order to make it conform better to the *AA*. Importantly, she found that out of ca. 1200 sections of *rP* corresponding to sub-topics in the *AA*, 55 sections do not occur in any Chinese version. They include both additions and transpositions, and most of them bear a very close relationship to their corresponding *AA* headings (Lethcoe, p. 504). Such passages were probably added to or transposed within the *PP* sūtra in order to better align it to the *AA* (Lethcoe, pp. 503-505). In other words, even though the *AA* is a commentary on the *PP* sūtra, portions of the revised 25,000 *PP* (*rP*) represent later changes written into the *sūtra* in order to make it conform better to its commentary.

Among the passages which were probably added to the *PP* for this purpose are *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 (Lethcoe, p. 504). They are not found in

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23 *ibid.*, pp. 500-504.

any portion of any of the Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP*. They are only found in the revised version of the 25,000 *PP* (*rP*), a version which was unknown in China. The fact that these passages are missing in all Chinese translations probably means that they represent a later addition to the 25,000 *PP*, an addition not known to the Chinese translators. And the fact that *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 so clearly align with *AA* 8 suggests that these passages were added to the *PP* sūtra precisely in order to give the appearance that they were the textual bases for *AA* 8. These observations do not constitute a proof of their addition to the *sūtra* after the *AA* was composed. But it is suggestive, and fits the pattern of evidence which will be presented below.

Hsuan tsang was a prodigious Chinese scholar who travelled to India in the seventh century and studied for several years at Nālandā Monastic University under its abbot, Śīlabhadra. He carried to China and later translated the 100,000 verse *PP*, the 25,000 verse *PP*, the 18,000 verse *PP* and two versions of the 8,000 verse *PP sūtras* (Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, p.21). We would expect him to have known about any version of the *PP sūtra* available at Nālandā. The fact that he did not even make mention of the revised 25,000 *PP* does raise the distinct possibility that it was not yet composed in his time (see Lethcoe, "Some Notes," p. 499, note 3). We have conservatively dated the *AA* to the period from the 4th to the early 6th century CE. Hsuan tsang went to India in the middle of the 7th century. If *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were added to the 25,000 *PP* after Hsuan tsang, it would mean that the

passages were written at least a century and a half after the *AA* was composed.

## 2.B.2. rP Passages VIII 1-VIII 3 Are Missing in All Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras Extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan Except rP

As mentioned above, the Large *PP* sūtra is represented by three different texts: the 100,000 verse *PP*, the 25,000 verse *PP* and the 18,000 verse *PP*. As Conze notes: "These three texts are really one and the same book. They only differ in the extent to which the 'repetitions' are copied out."[24] Passage for passage, the three texts contain the same material. Except in rare cases, they only differ in the extent to which they repeat the same *PP* formulas. For this reason Conze appropriately refers to the three as different versions of one sūtra, the "Large *PP* Sūtra".

The 100,000 *PP* is extant in a number of Sanskrit manuscripts, and in Tibetan translation in the *bKa' 'gyur* (Pk 730). The unrevised 25,000 *PP* is not entirely extant in Sanskrit. The first three fifths of the sūtra are preserved in Sanskrit in the Gilgit Manuscript of the Large *PP* Sūtra.[25] But the latter portions of the sūtra are missing. The latter portions especially concern us since they correspond to chapters 6 through 8 of the *AA*. The unrevised 25,000 *PP* is, however, fully extant in Tibetan

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[24] Conze, *Selected Sayings*, p. 12.
[25] Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, p. 35; R. Vira and L. Chandra, *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*, New Delhi, Śatapiṭaka Series, volume 10, parts 3 and 4, 1966, part 5, 1970

translation (Pk 731). The first three fifths of the 18,000 *PP* are not extant in Sanskrit, but the last two fifths, corresponding to chapter 6 through 8 of the *AA*, are preserved in Sanskrit in the Gilgit Manuscript.[26] The 18,000 *PP* is fully extant in Tibetan translation (Pk 732).

Checking all extant Sanskrit and Tibetan editions of the Large Sūtra, we find that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 do not occur in the Sanskrit manuscripts of the 100,000 *PP*.[27] They do not occur in the Tibetan translation of that sūtra.[28] They do not occur in the Tibetan translations of the unrevised 25,000 *PP* (the Sanskrit for this part of the sūtra is not extant).[29] They do not occur in the Sanskrit Gilgit manuscript of the 18,000 *PP*.[30] Nor do they occur in the Tibetan translations of the 18,000 *PP*.[31] In short, *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are missing in all extant Sanskrit and Tibetan editions of the Large PP Sūtra except rP. No translator is named in the Tibetan bKa' 'gyur for the 100,000, the unrevised 25,000, and the 18,000 verse *PP* sūtras.[32] However, all of these sūtras are listed in the lDan kar catalogue, which was compiled in the latter part of the 8th century during the reign of the Tibetan king Khri

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26 *PP Lit.*, p. 40. Vira and Chandra, *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts.*

27 *PP Lit.*, pp. 37, 44.

28 Pk 730. These passages are missing at the beginning of chapter 63, fol. 213-5-1.

29 Pk 731. The passages are missing at the beginning of chapter 62, fol. 134-5-3.

30 E. Conze, editor and translator, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aśṭādaśasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, Roma, ISMEO, 1974, p. 35. The passages are missing at the beginning of *parivarta* 73.

31 Pk 732, they are missing at the beginning of chapter 73, fol. 146-1-7.

32 *PP Lit.*, pp 31-41. Conze and the rNyingma edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* list Ye shes sde with a question mark as translator for the 25,000 *PP sūtra*. If true, this would put the translation in the late 8th century.

srong lde brtsan (ca. 740-798 CE).[33] The Sanskrit manuscripts from which the first Tibetan translations of these sūtras were made, then, were 8th century manuscripts.

All of this tends to indicate that the passages in question (*rP* VIII 1-VIII 3) were added to the Large *PP sūtra* after all three of its recensions (100,000, 25,000, and 18,000) were well established. And because the passages occur only in the revised version of the 25,000 *PP* (in its Sanskrit manuscripts and Tibetan translation), and, to my knowledge, are not found in any other version of any *PP sūtra* in any language, it is not unreasonable to assume that they were inserted into the revised *PP* at the time of its redaction[34].

The translators into Tibetan of *rP* are identified in its colophon as Tshul khrims rgyal ba and Śāntibhadra, both of whom can be dated to the middle part of the eleventh century.[35] Thus, *rP*, the revised version of the 25,000 Large *PP sūtra* was transmitted to Tibet about two and a half centuries after all the other versions of the Large *PP* sūtra. This may indicate that *rP* was not redacted until after the other versions of the Large *PP* had already been transmitted to Tibet, i.e. not until at least the latter part of the 8th century. In the postscript of the Tibetan translation of *rP*, the redactor identifies himself as Haribhadra (Pk 5188, fols. 61-3-1

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33 Snellgrove and Richardson, *Cultural History of Tibet*, p. 78 for dates of Khri srong lde brtsan. For lDan kar listing, see *Journal Asiatique* 241, 1953, p. 319.
34 See also Conze, *Gilgit Manuscript*, p. 64, where he notes: " VIII 1-3 are found in [r]P only, but not in Ad [18,000], S [100,000] or the unrevised P [25,000].")
35 Tshul khrims rgyal ba co-translated a Vinaya text with Atiśa (Roerich, *Blue Annals*, p.86), placing him in the 11th century (Atiśa died in 1054). Śāntibhadra is listed in the *Blue Annals* (p. 360), along with Atiśa, as an Indian teacher of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* to 'Gos lhas btsas, an eleventh century disciple of 'Brog mi (992-1072 CE).

to 61-3-2). Because Haribhadra lived at the end of the 8th century and beginning of the 9th century (ca. 770-810), it is not unreasonable to believe that postscript and accept that he was rP's redactor.[36] Further, the first Indian scholars (to my knowledge) to quote from *rP* are Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE) and Abhayākaragupta (early 12th century), both of whom come after Haribhadra's time.[37] From that time onward, Indo-Tibetan scholars routinely quoted *rP* in their commentaries on the *AA* (see above).

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36 Basing himself on a report by the Tibetan scholar Taranatha (16th-17th century) which said that Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early 6th century) consulted a revised version of the *PP*, Conze surmised that the version of *rP* extant in 19th century Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts belonged to the 5th century (*PP Literature*, p.37), while the version in the Tibetan canon whose postscript identifies Haribhadra as redactor was a further revision by Haribhadra in the late 8th century. However, *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are found equally in the extant Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts of *rP* and in the Tibetan translation of *rP*. The evidence we are presenting here already tends to indicate that *rP*, in all its extant editions, was redacted in the late 8th century at the earliest, which would support its attribution to Haribhadra. Evidence presented below will demonstrate that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII.3 post-date Ārya Vimuktisena. And since all extant editions of *rP* contain passages VIII 1-VIII 3, all editions in Sanskrit and Tibetan post-date Ārya Vimuktisena, which means simply that there was no edition of *rP* in the 5th century as proposed by Conze. We will also present further independent evidence below that Haribhadra himself referred to *rP* and probably redacted it. The remark by Taranatha which Conze relies upon was made a thousand years after Ārya Vimuktisena and hardly carries much credibility in light of the extensive textual evidence discussed here and below.

37 Ratnākaraśānti's *Śuddhamati*, Pk 5199, 281-5-2 ff. and *Sāratamā*, Pk 5200, 92-4-4 ff., Jaini's Sanskrit edition, p. 172; Abhayākaragupta's *Marmakaumudi*, Pk 5202, 198-5-6ff. and *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, 232-1-3ff.

### 2.B.3. rP Passages VIII 1-VIII 3 Were Not Part of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra in Ārya Vimuktisena's Time: The Evidence of Ārya Vimuktisena's Commentary

One of the main purposes of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, as noted earlier, was to identify the textual basis in the 25,000 *PP* sūtra for each of the *AA*'s topics and subtopics. The *AA* consists of eight substantive chapters, each of which explicates one of the eight *abhisamayas* (as explained in the previous chapter of this thesis). The explanation of the eight *abhisamayas* in the eight chapters is done by reference to 70 topics. And the 70 topics divide into some 1200 subtopics. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine how Ārya Vimuktisena treats each of the 1200 subtopics, I have examined how he introduces each of the 70 topics, and a good many of the subtopics.

Throughout Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary (the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti)* whenever he introduces a new *AA* topic, he uses a standard procedure for identifying the *PP* passage upon which he believes the *AA* topic to be based. First, he names the *AA* topic. He gives a brief explanation of it (often breaking it into its subtopics). He quotes the *AA* verse or verses which teach that topic. And he either quotes or explicitly paraphrases the corresponding 25,000 *PP sūtra* passage upon which he believes the *AA* verses to be based. Using this procedure, he identifies explicitly, by quote or paraphrase, the 25,000 *PP sūtra* passages which he thought to be the textual bases for all of the first 66 of the 70

topics in the *AA*, i.e. for every single one of the topics in the *AA*'s first seven chapters.

How can we be sure that he is quoting or paraphrasing the *PP* sūtra for each of topics in the *AA*'s first seven chapters? Couldn't he be giving his own explanations, using concepts and expressions similar to those of the *PP* sūtras? In fact, Ārya Vimuktisena gives explicit indication in his Sanskrit syntax that he is quoting or paraphrasing the *PP* sūtra rather than presenting his own explanations. He always uses one of the expressions standardly employed in Sanskrit to indicate direct quotes and paraphrases: "*yad āha ... iti*" ("as [the *PP* sūtra] said"), "*yad āha ... ityādi*" ("as [the *PP* sūtra] said, etc."), "*yathā*" ("as [in sūtra]"), or "*iti*" indicating a direct quote. Only the first chapter of Ārya Vimuktisena's *AA* commentary is presently available in Sanskrit (Pensa's critical edition)[38], but that is an extensive chapter; and it can be used to find the correlative Tibetan terms in the Tibetan translation of the rest of the commentary, available in the Tibetan tripitika (Pk 5185, pp. 45-102). The Tibetan equivalents are, respectively: "*zhes gang gsungs pa yin no*", "*zhes bya ba la sogs pa gang gsungs pa yin no*", "*ji skad du*", and "*zhes bya ba.*" For all 66 topics in the *AA*'s first seven chapters Ārya Vimuktisena employs one or more of these expressions to tell us that he is quoting or directly paraphrasing the 25,000 verse*PP sūtra*. For all the topics in the first seven chapters of the *AA*, he quotes the *AA* verses which teach the topic and, soon thereafter,

38 Corrado Pensa, *L'Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena*, 1967.

quotes or directly paraphrases the *PP* passages upon which he thinks those *AA* verses are based.

Furthermore, in most of these cases (51 out of the 66), he uses the vocative case for the name of a person in the *PP* sūtra. The *PP* sūtra, like other Buddhist sūtras, is in the form of dialogues between the Buddha and various disciples and deities. In these dialogues, one person is always addressing another, and therefore, generally begins his speech by calling out to the person he is addressing, using the vocative form of the person's name. Thus, the vocatives of one or more of the names "Bhagavat", "Subhuti", "Śāriputra", etc. appear in almost every *PP* passage, e.g.:

> [The Bhagavat says:] Śāriputra (vocative), a bodhisattva, a great being, who wants to fully know all dharmas in all respects should make endeavors in the perfection of wisdom.
> [Śāriputra replies:] Bhagavan (vocative), how should he make such endeavors?

The appearance of these names in vocative case in Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary shows that he is, in fact, directly quoting the *PP* sūtra. For 51 of the 66 topics of the *AA*'s first seven chapters, he gives the vocative forms of the names of the participants in the dialogues of the *PP* sūtra. Even for the15 of the 66 topics where he does not quote the names of the speakers, he still clearly signals that he is quoting or directly paraphrasing their words in the *PP* sūtra through his use of the Sanskrit markers mentioned above.

Given Ārya Vimuktisena's invariable procedure of identifying the *PP* passages for each *AA* topic upon introducing the topic, it is interesting and

significant that he stops doing this when he begins commenting on *AA* chapter 8. All commentators agreed that *AA* chapter 8 taught buddhahood through four topics. Ārya Vimuktisena identified the four topics of *AA* chapter 8 to be *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*, and *[Buddha]karma* (Buddha's activity. See the previous chapter of this thesis on *AA* 8 and its table of contents).[39] If Ārya Vimuktisena thought the first three topics of *AA* 8 (the three *kāyas*) were based upon *PP* sūtra passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, as later Indian and Tibetan commentators thought, we would expect him to quote or paraphrase those sūtra passages, just as he did for every single one of the 66 topics in the *AA*'s first seven chapters. But he does not. Unusually, when he introduces the first two topics of *AA* chapter 8, *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, he quotes the *AA* verses which teach them, but makes no immediate reference to the *PP* sūtra. Instead, he presents only his own independent explications of these *kāyas*. We can tell he is giving his own explanation of the topics, without quoting or paraphrasing the sūtra, because he does not use any of the necessary Sanskrit markers, nor does he give the names of the *PP* characters in vocative.[40]

But, when he introduces the third topic of *AA* chapter 8, *nairmāṇikakāya*, he reverts back to his usual procedure of immediately quoting the *PP* passage which teaches the topic, marking the quote with

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[39] *Abhisamayālamkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, Vol. 88, pp. 92-100. At 92-4-6 ff. Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the three *kāyas* as the first three topics of *AA* chapter 8. At 98-4-7 and 98-5-1 to 98-5-3, he explicitly identifies the fourth topic of *AA* chapter 8 as "*sprul pa'i sku'i phrin las*," "the activity of the *nairmāṇikakāya*."

[40] *Abhisamayālamkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 92-4-7 to 92-5-7 on *svābhāvikakāya*, and 96-2-5 to 96-2-8 on *sāmbhogikakāya*.

the usual Sanskrit markers ("*iti*", "*zhes bya ba*" in the Tibetan text) and quoting the names of the *PP* characters in vocative.[41] Interestingly, the *PP* passage he quotes as the textual basis for the topic *nairmāṇikakāya* is not *rP* VIII 3, the one identified as such by late Indian and Tibetan commentators. It is the *PP* passage after *rP* VIII 3, the *PP* passage numbered "VIII 4" in Conze's numbering system for the Large *PP sūtra*.[42]

Ārya Vimuktisena again employs his usual modus operandi when he introduces the fourth topic of *AA* chapter 8: [Buddha]*karma*. He quotes the *PP* textual basis for the topic, marking the quote with the usual Sanskrit markers. And the *PP* passage he quotes as the basis for the fourth topic, Buddha]*karma*, is the *PP* passage numbered "VIII 5" in Conze's numbering system.[43] In short, Ārya Vimuktisena makes no mention whatsoever of *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3. If he had known of those passages, we would expect him to have quoted or paraphrased them as the textual bases of their corresponding topics in the *AA*, as he

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41 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 98-5-3 to 98-5-7.

42 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 98-5-3 to 98-5-7; Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section VIII 4; Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā: Chapters 70 to 82 Corresponding to the 6th, 7th and 8th Abhisamayas*, section VIII 4, p. 164; *The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom*, Motilal edition, p. 573.

In Conze's translation, *PP* passage VIII 4 begins: "How, O Lord, when all dharmas are like a dream, non-entities, with nonexistence for their own-being and empty of own-marks, can there be a definite distinction between them, ...?"

43 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 99-1-5 ff.; Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section VIII 5; Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript*, section VIII 5, p. 167; *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, p. 576.

In Conze's translation, *PP* passage VIII 5 begins: "Here, surveying the world with my Buddha-eye, I have seen in the Eastern direction, in world systems countless like the sands of the Ganges, Bodhisattvas who have deliberately hurled themselves into the great hells, ...."

had done in the case of all other *PP* passages corresponding to the entire rest of the *AA*.

It is important to reiterate here that *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, which Ārya Vimuktisena was unaware of, are not found in any version of the Large *PP* sūtra except *rP* (the revised version of the 25,000 *PP*), while *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5, which Ārya Vimuktisena presented as the entire textual basis for *AA* chapter 8, are found in every version of the Large *PP* Sūtra available to us in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan (100,000, 25,000 and 18,000). This constitutes strong evidence that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were added to the Large *PP* sūtra some time after Ārya Vimuktisena, and that *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 were indeed the textual bases for *AA* chapter 8.

Besides the negative evidence that Ārya Vimuktisena did not quote or paraphrase *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, he also presents us with important positive evidence to support our hypothesis that the *PP* sūtra of his time did not contain *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, but only passages VIII 4-VIII 5. Although, as noted above, he does not quote the *PP* sūtra when he introduces the first two topics of *AA* chapter 8, *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, he does quote from the *PP* sūtra when dealing with a few of their subtopics. And these quotations, too, come not from *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, but from passages which follow them.

According to Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, the first verse of *AA* chapter 8 teaches its first topic, *svābhāvikakāya*, while verses 8.2-8.6 explicate the collection of undefiled Buddha dharmas, which are included within that first topic as phenomenal expressions of *svābhāvikakāya* (see

translation of *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 in previous chapter of this thesis). According to Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, then, his discussion of the twenty-one types of undefiled Buddha dharma constitutes an explanation of twenty-one subtopics under the first topic of *AA* chapter 8, *svābhāvikakāya*. Ārya Vimuktisena explicates in some detail several of the undefiled dharmas probably basing himself on Abhidharma sources.[44] When he comes to the last of the dharmas listed in *AA* vs. 8.6, *sarvākārajñatā* (Tib. *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa nyid*), total omniscience, he quotes the *PP* sūtra as textual basis.[45] The passage he quotes is found in section VIII 5 of the unrevised 25,000 *PP* in its extant versions in Tibetan translation and in Kumarajiva's and Hsuan tsang's Chinese translations.[46] Thus, although Ārya Vimuktisena. does not quote the *PP* sūtra when first introducing the *AA* topic *svābhāvikakāya*, he does give one quote when explaining the last of its subtopics, *sarvākārajñatā*. And that one quote is drawn from *PP* passage VIII 5 (in Conze's number system).

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[44] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 92-5-8 to 96-2-1. On Abhidharma sources for Ārya Vimuktisena's and others' discussions of some of the *anāsrava dharmas*, see Sera rje btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan's *Chos sku spyi don*, pp. 29a-1 to 33a-4.

[45] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 96-1-7 to 96-1-8: "*rab 'byor rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi dmigs pa ni dngos po med pa'o/ bdag po ni dran pa'o/ rnam pa ni zhi ba ste mtshan nyid med pa'o/ zhes gsungs so/.*"

[46] The *PP* passage in the previous note occurs in unrevised 25,000 *PP*, Tibetan translation, Pk 731, fol. 143-2-1. On the Chinese translations, see Lethcoe, "Some Notes," p. 504, Table II, #67. The passage Ārya Vimuktisena quotes (in the previous note) is also found in the Tibetan translations of the 100,000 *PP*, 18,000 *PP* and *rP*. It is not found in the Gilgit Manuscript of the 18,000 *PP*, nor in the Sanskrit manuscripts of *rP*. For this reason Conze does not include it in his English translation of the Large *PP* sūtra, *Large Sūtra*, section VIII 5, p. 583, nor in its Appendix I, p.656.

Similarly, although he does not quote the *PP* when introducing *AA* 8's second topic, *sāmbhogikakāya* (presented in *AA* vs. 8.12), he does quote the *PP* sūtra on several of its subtopics: the thirty-two marks and eighty signs (set forth in *AA* vss. 8.13-8.32). All of those sūtra quotes are from the Large *PP* passage VIII 5. When explaining the causes of the *sāmbhogikakāya's* 32 major marks, he simply gives *PP* section VIII 5's account of them, indicating that he is quoting sūtra by saying: "*yathā sūtram...*" (which, in Tibetan translation appears as: "*ji skad du mdo las* ....")[47] He also quotes from *PP* passage VIII 5 extensively on the 80 signs.[48]

Finally, after completing his explanations of *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, Ārya Vimuktisena gives us the most convincing positive evidence of all that he based his entire commentary of *AA* chapter 8 on *PP sūtra* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5. Immediately after finishing his comments on *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, he says: "As for the teaching of these two [*kāyas*], they are taught in the section of the [*PP*] sūtra which teaches the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activity, [in the section on] the means of gathering disciples which is the giving of supramundane

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47 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 96-5-8. The *PP* passage Ārya quotes on the causes of the 32 marks is found in the unrevised 25,000 *PP* in Tibetan translation, Pk 731, fols. 143-5-1 to 144-2-6 as well as in *rP*. From *rP* it is translated in Conze's *Large Sūtra*, section VIII 5, pp. 659-661.
48 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 97-4-5 ff. Ārya Vimuktisena indicates he is quoting the *PP* sūtra with the expressions: "*āha*" ("*gsungs pa ni*" in Tibetan), and "*sūtrasya vacana*" ("mdo'i tshig" in Tibetan). The *PP* passage he quotes is in the unrevised 25,000 *PP*, Pk 731, fols. 144-2-6 to 145-4-1 as well as *rP*. It is translated in Conze's *Large Sūtra*, section VIII 5, pp. 586-587.

dharma. Therefore they were not taught earlier."[49] Ārya Vimuktisena's statement: "the teaching of these two" ("*'di gnyis kyi bshad pa ni ...*") can only refer to the teaching of the *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, the two topics he has immediately finished explaining. Ārya Vimuktisena is saying that the *PP sūtra* does not contain any clearly distinct or separate sections concerning *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*. Rather, he finds a *sūtra* textual basis for these *kāya* topics within the *PP sūtra* passage which he understands to be teaching *nairmāṇikakāya*, specifically within the passage which explains the four means of collecting disciples (*catvāri saṃgrahavastūni*, Tib. *bsdu ba'i dngos po bzhi*). That passage is a portion of Large *PP* passage VIII 5. In it, the Bhagavat explains to Subhuti the Buddha's undefiled dharmas, his thirty-two marks, and his eighty signs.[50] It is precisely the passage from which Ārya Vimuktisena drew all of his quotes for his explanations of the subtopics under *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya* discussed just above.

Upon introducing the third topic of *AA* chapter 8, *nairmāṇikakāya*, Ārya Vimuktisena resumes his procedure of quoting the Large *PP* sūtra, but not the passage we would have expected if *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 were contained in the *PP* sūtra of his time. According to Ārya Vimuktisena, the *nairmāṇikakāya* is the means through which the *dharmakāyaphalaṃ* (resultant *dharmakāya*, meaning buddhahood as a

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49 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 98-4-6 to 98-4-7. The Tibetan reads: "*'di gnyis kyi bshad pa ni sprul pa'i sku'i phrin las ston pa'i mdo las 'jig rten las 'das pa'i chos kyi sbyin pa'i bsdu ba'i dngos po nyid kyis ston par 'gyur te des na dang po ma gsungs so/.*"

50 Unrevised 25,000 *PP*, Pk 731, fols. 140-1-8 to 145-4-1; translated from *rP* in Conze's *Large Sūtra*, section VIII 5, pp. 580-587.

whole) carries out its uninterrupted activity to benefit living beings. He quotes *AA* chapter 8's verses 33-34a as teaching the *nairmāṇikakāya* (see previous chapter of this thesis), and then quotes *PP sūtra* passage VIII 4 as the textual source of those verses.[51] As mentioned above, Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta and the major Tibetan commentators identified *rP* VIII 3 as the sole textual basis for the *AA*'s teaching of *nairmāṇikakāya*. If the *PP* sūtra available to Ārya Vimuktisena contained that passage, we would have expected him to have quoted it, rather than *PP* passage VIII 4. After all, *rP* passage VIII 3 (translated above in section 2. A.) is a clear description of a Buddha's emanations (*nirmāṇa*) which comprise his *nairmāṇikakāya*. But Ārya Vimuktisena writes as if there were no passage VIII 3. Again, the simplest explanation for this is that the *PP* sūtra of his time did not contain it. He then identifies the rest of *AA* chapter 8's verses, 8.34b-8.40, as teaching its fourth topic: [Buddha] *karma*, the activity of buddhahood carried out by the *nairmāṇikakāya*. And he quotes *PP* passage VIII 5 as the textual source for those verses.[52]

To recapitulate, immediately following Ārya Vimuktisena's explanation of what he has identified as *AA* chapter 8's first two topics, *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, he tells us directly that the textual basis of those topics in the *PP* sūtra is to be found solely in passage VIII 5, and not to be found any earlier within the *PP* sūtra. This, he says, is

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51 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 98-5-3 to 98-5-4. *rP* VIII 4 is translated in Conze's *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 573 ff.

52 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, pp. 98-4-7 to 100-3-4. *rP* VIII 5 is translated in Conze's *Large Sūtra*, pp. 576-643.

because the *PP* sūtra teaches *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya* during the course of its explanation of the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activity, in *PP* passage VIII 5. He then goes on to explain the third and fourth topics of *AA* 8 as the *nairmāṇikakāya* and [Buddha]*karma* (the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activity).[53] He identifies the textual bases for these two topics to be *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 respectively, quoting them extensively. Ārya Vimuktisena, then, tells us quite straightforwardly that the sole textual bases in the *PP* sūtra of his time for all four topics of *AA* chapter 8, the three Buddha *kāyas* and Buddha's activity, are to be found in Large *PP sūtra* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5. This constitutes proof that the *PP* sūtra which Ārya Vimuktisena knew did not contain *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3.

It would appear, then, that Conze inadvertently obscured some of the textual history of the Large *PP* sūtra by devising a numbering system for its passages which is based on its revised version, *rP*. *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were added to the Large *PP* sūtra some time after Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary was composed. *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 were the only passages Ārya Vimuktisena knew which could correspond to *AA* chapter 8. If Conze had devised his numbering system for *PP*

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53 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 98-4-7. At fol. 98-4-7, Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the activity of *PP* passage VIII 5 as "*sprul pa'i sku'i phrin las*", "the activity of the *nairmāṇikakāya*". At fol. 98-5-7, he identifies the same activity as "*chos kyi sku'i phrin las*", "the activity of the *dharmakāya*". There is no contradiction. At fol. 98-5-1, he explains that the *nairmāṇikakāya* is the means through which *dharmakāyaphalaṃ*, i.e. buddhahood, acts. He understands the term "*dharmakāya*" in verse 8.40 to carry its inclusive sense, referring to buddhahood as a whole. See chapter 5, section 5 of this thesis on exclusive and inclusive meanings of "*dharmakāya*" in Yogācāra. Also see my remarks on Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation of *AA* vss. 8.33-8.34a in the previous chapter.

*sūtra* passages based on the unrevised Large *PP* available in Ārya Vimuktisena's time (ca. early 6th century) together with Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, rather than basing his numbering system on *rP*, the *PP sūtra* passages he numbered "VIII 4" and "VIII 5" might have been designated simply "VIII," signifying the section of the Large *PP sūtra* upon which *AA* chapter 8 was based.

2.B.4. Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra Passages VIII 4-VIII 5 Were the Actual Textual Basis for Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8. rP Passages VIII 1-VIII 3 Were Composed Based Upon Ārya Vimuktisena's Commentary, and Then Inserted into the Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra

Ārya Vimuktisena, without question, was the foremost *Prajñāpāramitā* scholar of his day. The fact that he had no knowledge of *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 is strong evidence that they were simply not part of the *PP sūtra* during his time. This means that they were most probably added to the *PP* sūtra after him. And since the *AA* was presumably composed earlier than any of its commentaries including Ārya Vimuktisena's, *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were not part of the *PP* sūtra at the time the *AA* was composed. Therefore, even though Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta and the leading Tibetan *PP* scholars thought *AA* chapter 8 was based in large part upon *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, in fact it was not.

Why did such prodigious late Indian and Tibetan scholars not realize this? One reason is that Ārya Vimuktisena's introductory comments on each of the three *kāyas* are broadly similar to the descriptions of them found in *PP sūtra* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3. Traditional scholars made the seemingly reasonable assumption that this similarity occurred because he had based his remarks on those *PP sūtra* passages. They assumed that his comments were in fact paraphrases of those *sūtra* passages. But we have demonstrated that those passages were almost certainly added *after* Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary was written. This means that the actual situation is the exact reverse of what later scholars assumed: somebody composed *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 and inserted them into the Large *PP sūtra* using Ārya Vimuktisena's comments as basis. Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks were not based on *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3; rather, *rP* passages 8VIII 1-VIII 3 were based on his remarks (for philologists who would like to see this demonstrated in detail, comparing passage for passage, see the accompanying annotation).[54]

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[54] Relevant portions of Ārya Vimuktisena's own introductory remarks on each of the three *kāyas* in his *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* (available only in Tibetan translation) are as follows:

**Ārya Vimuktisena:**

***svābhāvikakāya*** **-** ***Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti***, Pk 5185, fols. 92-4-8 ff. and 92-4-8 ff. (commenting on *AA* 8 vss. 1-6):

> *chos kyi dbyings dang ldan par gyur ba zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad kyi rnam pa thams cad du rnam par dag pa'i rang bzhin te ngo bo nyid gang yin pa de ni bcos ma ma yin pa'i don gyis na bcom ldan 'das kyi ngo bo nyid kyi sku yin par shes par bya ste/ ... gang dag gis rnam pa thams cad du shin tu rnam par dag pa'i ngo bo nyid chos kyi skur 'gyur ba zag pa med pa'i chos de rnams kyang gang zhig yin zhe na/ byang chub phyogs mthun tshad med*

*dang/ rnam par thar dang mthar gyis ni/ ...* etc. (quoting *AA* 8 vss. 2-6 listing the *buddha dharmas*).

***sambhogikakāya*** - *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 96-2-6 ff. (commenting on *AA* 8 vs 12):

> *sku des sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa' chen po sa chen po la zhugs pa rnams dang thabs cig tu ka na ma tho ba med pa theg pa chen po'i chos kyi longs spyod kyi dga' ba dang bde ba so sor myong bar mdzad pa yin no/.*

***nairmāṇikakāya*** - *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 98-5-1 ff.(commenting on *AA* 8 vss. 33-34a):

> *'bras bu'i gnas skabs rnam pa thams cad legs par yongs su rdzogs pa'i chos kyi sku thob pa ni 'khor ba ji srid par phyogs bcu'i 'jig rten gyi khams rnams su sprul ba rnams kyis lhun gyis grub ching rgyun mi 'chad par sems can gyi don sna tshogs pa 'jug par byed pa'i sgo nas gnas yongs su gyur ba'i phrin las kyi dbang du mdzad do/ bchom ldan 'das rmi lam lta bu dngos po med pa dang/ dngos po med pa'i ngo bo nyid dang/ rang gi mtshan mnyid kyis stong pa'i chos rnams la dge ba dang mi dge ba dang/ 'jig rten pa dang' 'jig rten las 'das pa zhes bya ba la sogs pa / ...* etc. (quoting *PP sūtra* passage VIII 4, Pk 5188, fols. 4-1-1 to 4-1-2)

*rP* (*revised 25,000 PP sūtra*) passages VIII 1-VIII 3 read as follows (I quote the Tibetan for comparison to Ārya Vimuktisena's passages above):

**rP passages VIII 1-VIII 3:**

*svābhāvikakāya* - **rP passage VIII 1**, Pk 5188, fols. 3-4-1 ff.:

> *rab 'byor gzhan yang zag pa med pa'i chos rmi lam lta bu dngos po dang mi ldan pa dngos po med pa'i rang bzhin can rang gis mtshan nyid kyis stong pa rnam pa thams cad yongs su dag par 'gyur ba de dag thams cad kyi rang bzhin gang yin pa mtshan nyid gcig po 'di lta ste/ mtshan nyid med pa de ni de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas yin par rig par bya ste/ rab 'byor byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po de ltar shes rab kyi pha rol tu phin pa la bslab par bya'o/ /rab 'byor gyis gsol ba/ bcom ldan 'das zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad kyang gang dag lags/ bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal ba/ byang chub kyi phogs kyi chos sum cu rtsa bdun dang/ tshad med pa bzhi dang/ ... etc.* (listing all the *buddhadharmas*)/ *rab 'byor 'di ni zag pa med pa'i chos thams cad ces bya'o/ /rab 'byor de ltar byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'di la bslab par bya'o zhes bya ba ni ngo bo nyid kyi sku yin no//.*

This passage of the revised *PP sūtra* appears to have been written based on Ārya Vimuktisena's corresponding remarks on *svābhāvikakāya* (*AA* vss. 8.1-8.6) above, while also making use of the terminology of *PP* section VIII 4 which immediately follows interpolated *PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 (*PP* VIII 4: ... *chos thams cad rmi lam lta bu*

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*dngos po ma mchis pa dngo bo ma mchis pa'i ngo bo nyid rang gi mtshan nyid kyis stong pa rnams la 'di dag ni ... etc.*, Pk 5188, fols. 4-1-1 ff.). Note that Ārya Vimuktisena raises a hypothetical question in his comments on *svābhāvikakāya* above: "*gang dag gis rnam pa thams cad du shin tu rnam par dag pa'i ngo bo nyid chos kyi skur 'gyur ba zag pa med pa'i chos de rnams kyang gang zhig yin zhe na/.*" "What are those undefiled dharmas whose completely purified nature is the *dharmakāya*?" As the answer to this he quotes *AA* vss.8.2-8.6. The author of *rP* passage VIII 1. puts Ārya Vimuktisena's hypothetical question into the mouth of Subhuti. If Ārya Vimuktisena had been quoting *rP* passage VIII 1., rather than the other way around, he would have indicated so with appropriate quotation markers, and by employing the names "Bhagavan" and "Subhuti" in the vocative, as he had done in similar cases throughout his commentary. To my knowledge, based on a review of his entire commentary, Ārya Vimuktisena never raises a question as a hypothetical when it was actually raised by a character in the *sūtra*. In such cases he always quotes the character in the *sūtra* asking the question.

***sambhogikakāya*** **- rP passage VIII 2,** Pk 5188, fols. 3-5-2 ff.:

> *rab 'byor gzhan yang shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'di la bslabs shing chos de dag thams cad thob nas bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub tu mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas te/ thams cad tu thams cad rnam pa thams cad nas thams cad du de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rnams kyi sku skyes bu chen po'i mtshan sum cu rtsha gnyis kyis brgyan pa/ dpe byad bzang bo rgyad cus brgyan pa/ byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnams la theg pa chen po mchog gi chos kyi longs spyod bla na med pa la dga' ba dang/ bde ba dang/ tshim pa dang/ rab tu dga' ba ston par mdzad par 'gyur ro zhes/ rab 'byor de ltar byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la bslab par bya'o zhes bya ba ni longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku yin no//.*

To my knowledge, there is no passage like this anywhere else in the *PP sūtras*. It is clearly modelled on Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks.

***nairmāṇikakāya*** **- rP passage VIII 3,** Pk 5188, 3-5-6 ff.:

> *rab 'byor gzhan yang shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la slob pa na chos de dag thams cad rtogs par byas nas bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub tu mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas nas phyogs bcu'i 'jig rten gyi khams dpag tu med mtha' med par dus thams cad du de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyi sku* (sDe dge: "*sku'i*") *sprul pa sna tshogs kyi sphrin gyi* (sDe dge: "*gyis*") *sems can thams cad gyi don mdzad pa de ltar rab 'byor byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la bslab par bya'o zhes bya ba ni sprul pa'i sku yin no//.*

Again, this passage is clearly based on Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks. Ārya Vimuktisena quotes the *PP* passage he identified as textual basis for *nairmāṇikakāya* after making his own comments on the subject; and that textual basis is *PP* passage VIII 4 (see above). He had never heard of *rP* passage VIII 3.

As we have noted, Ārya Vimuktisena identifies *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 as the textual bases for all of *AA* chapter 8. And this does appear reasonable. While *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are late additions, found only in the revised version of the Large *PP*, *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 are found in all extant recensions and translations of the Large *PP sūtra* in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 are found in the Gilgit manuscript of the 18,000 *PP* which is dated to the 5th or 6th century CE, and in Mokṣala's Chinese translation of the 25,000 *PP*, dated to 291 CE. It is likely, then, that they were generally included within the Large *PP* sūtra at the time the *AA* was composed, ca. 4th-early 6th century CE. Within the Large *PP*, passages VIII 4-VIII 5 comprise the last part of the sūtra, and immediately follow the passages identified by Ārya Vimuktisena and other commentators as the textual basis for *AA* chapter 7. It is natural that VIII 4-VIII 5 would be the textual basis for *AA* chapter 8. Furthermore, *AA* chapter 8, if read side by side with *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5, clearly does, in fact, comprise a brief synopsis of the content of those very sūtra passages (particularly with reference to the undefiled dharmas, the thirty-two marks and eighty signs, and the various bodhisattva activities).[55] It is therefore likely, as Ārya Vimuktisena claimed, that the *AA*'s author based *AA* chapter 8 on *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5.[56]

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[55] Amano, 1975, pp. 262-297. See Conze's English translation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, pp. 96-105, or my translation of *AA* chapter 8 in the previous chapter of this thesis, and compare to *PP sūtra* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 as translated in Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 573-643.

[56] Dutt, Conze and Lethcoe have all noted that the revised 25,000 *PP sūtra* is a recast version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, the section headings of the *AA* having been inserted into

2.B.5. The Textual History of rP, and Evidence that Haribhadra Was Its Redactor

At the end of section 2.B.2. of this chapter above, some comments were made concerning the possible date of redaction of *rP* (the revised 25,000 *PP sūtra*) and the probability that Haribhadra was its redactor. Those comments need to be updated with reference to the evidence of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary presented just above, and in light of a few other observations.

Nancy Lethcoe published a paper in 1976 of importance to our study (mentioned in section 2.B.1. above), in which she aligned the topics and subtopics of the *AA* with corresponding passages in three different Chinese translations of the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra* (translations made in three different periods in China: 291 CE, 403-404 CE, and 659-663 CE), and the Sanskrit manuscript of the revised 25,000 *PP* (*rP*). Lethcoe's findings indicate that the 25,000 *PP sūtra* went through several

the corresponding sections of the *sūtra*. In addition, Conze and Lethcoe noted that the *sūtra* in its revised edition was altered in certain places (by additions and transpositions) to bring it more closely into line with the *AA* (Nalinaksha Dutt, ed., *The Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Edited with Critical Notes and Introduction*, [London: Luzac & Co., 1934] pp. v-xiii. Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, pp. 37-39. Lethcoe, "Some Notes," pp. 500 ff.). With reference to *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, Conze, noting that these passages are missing in the Gilgit Manuscript of the 18,000 *PP*, believed they were later additions to the *PP sūtra* (Conze, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, p. xvii). Elsewhere, however, based on the report of Taranatha, Conze surmised that the revised 25,000 *PP* belonged to the 5th century, and that Ārya Vimuktisena consulted the revised *PP* before writing his own commentary on the *AA* (*PP Literature*, p. 37). Lethcoe found that revised *PP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were missing in all Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP* (Lethcoe, p. 504). No scholar, up to the present time, has noticed the evidence of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, which proves that *PP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were added after Ārya Vimuktisena (and were composed taking his remarks as basis). Nor has anyone noticed the implications of this for the interpretation of *AA* 8.

stages of development in India, involving additions of passages, transpositions, and in some cases omissions, culminating in the redaction of the revised version, *rP*.[57]

On pages 503-504 of her paper, Lethcoe notes a number of *AA* subtopics for which, in all three Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, there are no corresponding *sūtra* passages, but in the revised version of the *sūtra* (*rP*) there are corresponding passages. Of course, among these are *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, which are missing in all Chinese translations of the *sūtra* as discussed above. Also of interest to the present discussion, however, are the following *AA* subtopics which, according to Lethcoe's study, have no corresponding sections in all Chinese translations of the *sūtra* but do have corresponding sections in *rP* (numbered according to Conze's numbering system for *AA* topics and subtopics): I.1e.7-10, I.10.8.c-d, III.1-3, and III.5.[58] Without question, these passages of *rP*, together with *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, missing in all Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* up to the middle of the seventh century, are late additions to the *sūtra* .

I have checked Lethcoe's findings against the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra* (Peking edition) in the Tibetan canon (Pk 731) and against Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary which aligns the passages of the 25,000 *PP*

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[57] Lethcoe, "Some Notes," pp. 499-511; see especially her conclusions on pp. 510-511.
[58] Lethcoe, "Some Notes," pp. 503-504. See Conze, *Large Sūtra* (Motilal Edition), for the English translation of the Large *PP sūtra* with *AA* subtopic headings I.1e.7-10, I.10.8.c-d, III.1-3, III.5 and VIII 1-VIII 3 inserted in the *sūtra*, in accord with *rP*, on pp. 48, 199-200, 298-299, 653-654. The *sūtra* passages corresponding to all those *AA* subtopics are found in *rP* and are missing in all Chinese translations of the 25,000 *PP* sūtra.

*sūtra* with corresponding sections of the *AA* (the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra* is extant in its entirety only in Chinese and Tibetan translation, not in Sanskrit. Hence the importance of determining whether passages missing in all Chinese translations of it are also missing in the Tibetan translation or not). I found that of the passages noted above which are missing in all Chinese translations of the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra*, passages I.1e.7-10 are also missing in the Tibetan translation of that *sūtra* but are directly quoted in Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary (Pk 5185, fols. 10-3-8 to 10-4-8); passages I.10.8.c-d are also missing in the Tibetan translation and are *not* quoted or referred to in Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary (Pk 5185, fols. 44-5-5 ff. is where they should have appeared); and passages III.1-3 and III.5 *are* found in the Tibetan translation and are quoted in Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary (Pk 5185, fols. 54-5-6 to 55-2-1). As discussed above, passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are missing in all Chinese translations of the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra*, are also missing in the Tibetan translation of that *sūtra*, and are not quoted or referred to in Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary.

All of this tends to support Lethcoe's contention that the 25,000 *PP sūtra* went through stages of development in India. It also indicates that passages were added to and transposed within certain recensions of the *sūtra* gradually over time to make it align better with the *AA*. This may well have comprised a gradual process of change, which finally culminated with the insertion of the *AA*'s topic and subtopic titles into corresponding portions of the *sūtra* and with the addition of the passages corresponding to *AA* topics VIII 1-VIII 3 (which are missing in all

versions of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* except *rP*; passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are found in all extant editions of *rP* in Sanskrit and Tibetan translation). This could mean that a special edition of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* developed in *AA* cult circles over time, eventually becoming redacted as the revised edition, *rP*.

The evidence discussed earlier indicates that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were written and inserted into the *sūtra* based upon Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary. In fact, the correspondences made in *rP* between *PP sūtra* passages and the sections of the *AA* seem to follow precisely Ārya Vimuktisena's alignment of those correspondences, and the *AA* topic titles inserted into *rP* reflect Ārya Vimuktisena's titles and synopses. Since *rP* as a whole, then, was apparently redacted based upon Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, it is not surprising for us to have found that *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were written and newly inserted into the *sūtra* based upon Ārya Vimuktisena's own remarks.

What was the redactor's motivation for writing new passages into the *PP sūtra*, a text which was traditionally accepted as scripture? In fact, the redactor of *rP* may have not noticed that Ārya Vimuktisena, at the point corresponding to *AA* chapter 8 in his commentary, suddenly stopped quoting the *PP* sūtra. He may have been so accustomed to Ārya Vimuktisena's usual procedure of quoting sūtra for each *AA* topic and subtopic that he simply presumed that the remarks Ārya Vimuktisena made on the first few topics of *AA* chapter 8 were paraphrases of passages found in some version of the *sūtra* the redactor did not have. And based on such considerations, he may have written Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks

into the *sūtra* as passages VIII 1-VIII 3 without realizing that he was making an entirely new addition to the *sūtra*. The irony in this case is that the redactor may have thought that he was restoring the *sūtra* to a form closer to what it was in Ārya Vimuktisena's time. He did not, of course, have available to him all the editions of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* in its various translations in Chinese and Tibetan which are now available to us in modern research libraries.

*rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, then, are a distinguishing trait of *rP*, found only in that version of the *sūtra*, and apparently added to the *sūtra* close to or at the time of its redaction in the form of *rP*. We know that *rP*, as we have it, was redacted some time after Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early 6th century; it was based upon his commentary) and before Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE, Ratnākaraśānti quoted *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3). Although the Large versions of the *PP sūtra* in 100,000, 25,000 and 18,000 verses are all listed in the lDan kar catalogue, compiled during the reign of Tibetan king Khri srong lde brtsan (ca. 740-798 CE), *rP* is not listed in the catalogue. This may indicate it was not redacted until at least the end of the 8th century. As noted in the discussion in section 2.B.2 above, the redactor of *rP* identifies himself in the postscript of its Tibetan translation as Haribhadra (Pk 5188, fols. 61-3-1 to 61-3-2). Haribhadra lived at the earliest time we can accept for the redaction of *rP* (ca 770-810 CE), the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century, and I see no reason to doubt that he was the redactor.

Basing himself on a report by the Tibetan scholar Taranatha (16th-17th century) which said that Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early 6th century)

consulted a revised version of the *PP*, Conze surmised that at least the Sanskrit edition of *rP* belonged to the 5th century, while perhaps the Tibetan translation represents a later redaction by Haribhadra (*PP Literature*, p.37). But passages VIII 1-VIII 3 are found in both the Sanskrit manuscripts and in the Tibetan translation of *rP*, and the textual evidence presented above strongly suggests that any text of *rP* containing those passages was redacted in the late 8th century at the earliest, supporting its attribution to Haribhadra. In any case, we have proven that *rP* came after, not before, Ārya Vimuktisena, Taranatha's remark (made a thousand years after the fact) notwithstanding.

There is also further evidence that Haribhadra himself knew of *rP* and referred to it. If true, this would make Haribhadra himself the first Indian scholar to refer directly to *rP*, which lends some further support to his having been its redactor. At the close of his remarks in the *Sphuṭārthā* on *AA* verses 8.2-8.6 concerning the set of undefiled Buddha dharmas, Haribhadra makes an important remark concerning the use of the word "and" ("*ca*") in *AA* vs. 8.6. *AA* verses 8.2-8.5 (the reader may recall from the previous chapter) list the various undefiled Buddha dharmas up to *mahatī karuṇā*, great compassion. *AA* verse 8.6 lists the final two undefiled dharmas, the eighteen unique qualities and total omniscience, and then ends the whole list of dharmas with the term "*ca*" translated "and":

*āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭadaśeritāḥ/*
*sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate//* AA 8.6

> "...the eighteen qualities unique to the Sage, and total omniscience": thus is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated. *AA* 8.6

The Sanskrit term "*ca*," placed at the end of a list, generally indicates that the meaning "and" connects the last term to all previous terms in the list. In English, we say, "the dog, the cat, *and* the parrot." In Sanskrit, this list would be structured: "dog, cat, parrot *ca*," with the same sense. In *AA* vs. 8.6, the list of twenty-one types of undefiled Buddha dharma ends with the twenty-first term "*sarvākārajñatā*" ("total omniscience") followed by the terms "*ca*" ("and") and "*iti*" ("thus," the two latter terms modified by external saṃdhi to make "*ceti*"). *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6, then, are most straightforwardly translated, as we did in the previous chapter of this thesis: "'The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, ..., the great compassion for living beings, the eighteen qualities unique to the Muni, and (*ca*) total omniscience': thus (*iti*) is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated."

In his *Sphuṭārthā*, Haribhadra makes an unusual remark concerning the word "*ca*." He says, "*ca-śabdopāttā mārggajñatādayo 'pi prāg uktāḥ/*," "Included within the expression '*ca*' is the path knowledge (*mārgajñatā*), etc. which have already been explained earlier [in previous chapters]."[59] Haribhadra is saying here that the term "*ca*" following the term "*sarvākārajñatā*," is used to designate the inclusion of *mārgajñatā* and (we are safe to assume) *sarvajñatā*, which as a threesome comprise

[59] Amano, 1983, p.4 near bottom. For Tibetan, see Amano, 1975, p.267 bottom.

the three *abhisamayas* which are the subject matter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* first three chapters (see chapter 6 of this thesis for a discussion of them). This is a very unusual interpretation for the meaning of the Sanskrit term "*ca*." Haribhadra goes out of his way to stretch the meaning of the term so that all three principle knowledges (*sarvākārajñatā, mārgajñatā, sarvajñatā*) forming the subject matter of the *AA* will be semantically included in *AA* verses 8.2-8.6 (the Sanskrit term which usually does the duty Haribhadra wants "*ca*" to do is "*ādi*," meaning "etc." If the *AA*'s author had meant to say what Haribhadra interprets him as saying, he would more likely have used *ādi*: making "*sarvākārajñatādi*" or some equivalent). Haribhadra's unusual interpretation of the Sanskrit indicates that the semantic inclusion of all three knowledges (*jñatās*) at this juncture in the *AA* was important to him for some reason.

As noted in chapter 3 of this thesis, the lists of the undefiled Buddha dharmas (*anāsrava dharmas*) are periodically presented throughout the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* as phenomenal expressions of a Buddha's gnosis. The lists of undefiled dharmas, more or less complete, appear in the various editions of the Large *PP sūtra* in the passages corresponding to *AA* subtopics 1.5.5, 1.5.7, 1.5,11, 1.9.14, 4.1.3, and 8.5.2 (Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 121-123, 152-160, 315-317, 580-583, 654-656). These lists are presented throughout all the editions of the Large *PP sūtra* available in Sanskrit and Tibetan (100,000, 25,000, and 18,000). I have examined all editions available to me of the Large *PP sūtra* in Sanskrit and Tibetan, and have found that wherever the list of undefiled Buddha dharmas is

presented, the term "*sarvākārajñatā*" is never accompanied by the terms "*mārgajñatā*" or "*sarvajñatā*," with only one exception. In other words, within the context of presenting the formulaic list of undefiled dharmas throughout the Large *PP* sūtras, although the term "*sarvākārajñatā*" occasionally appears within that list, the terms "*mārgajñatā*, and "*sarvajñatā*" are never listed with it, with only one exception. That exception is (you guessed it) *rP* passage VIII 1, which is, to my knowledge, unique among all Large *PP* sūtra passages in ending its list of the undefiled dharmas with all three *jñātās* listed together: "*saptatriṃśadbodhipakṣā (etc. to)... sarvākārajñatā mārgajñatā sarvajñatā vā ime khalu subhute anāsravāḥ sarvadharmā....*," "The thirty-seven factors which foster enlightenment, (etc. to) ... total omniscience, path knowledge and all knowledge: these are indeed, Subhuti, all the undefiled dharmas."[60]

What does this mean? One possibility is that Haribhadra had *rP* before him and referred to *rP* passage VIII 1 when he made his remarks on *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6. He would therefore have felt it necessary to interpret the ending of *AA* verses 8.1-8.6 in a way parallel to what he saw at the end of *rP* passage VIII 1 (the set of three *jñātās* listed together). Another very distinct possibility, however, is that Haribhadra himself, for sake of completion, wanted the three *jñatās* listed together in the list of undefiled dharmas, and therefore wrote them himself into *rP* passage VIII 1 and into his remarks on *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6. In other words, Haribhadra at least

60 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section VIII 1.; translated in *Large Sūtra*, p. 653 and by me in section 2. A. above.

knew of *rP*. And when we combine these observations with all those made above, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that he made *rP*, that he was its redactor and the author of *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3.

There is further evidence that Haribhadra was indeed the redactor of *rP*. Dharmamitra, thought to be an immediate successor of Haribhadra, wrote an important sub-commentary to Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, the *Prasphuṭapadā*.[61] Dharmamitra, with reference to the controversy evidently created by Haribhadra's having newly interpreted *AA* chapter 8 as teaching four *kāyas*, mentions that some scholars thought that Haribhadra personally held there were only three *kāyas*, but that he taught four in some of his commentaries to please his guru, Vairocana. This is indicated, said these scholars, by the fact that Haribhadra taught three *kāyas* in another of his texts.[62] The only text ascribed to Haribhadra which explicitly delineates three *kāyas* is *rP* itself (which distinguishes three *kāyas* in its titles for *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3). Although Haribhadra makes a formalized prayer "for the attainment of the three *kāyas*" at the end of his *Āloka*, he clearly delineates four *kāyas* at length in his remarks earlier in that same text.[63] His formalized prayer at the end of his *Āloka* follows a standardized and traditional form which surely does not consitute an independent teaching or commentary on his part. His *Sphuṭārthā* also very clearly delineates four *kāyas*, as does his very

61 Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, p.102.
62 Dharmamitra, *Prasphuṭapadā*, Pk 5194, fols. 108-2-3 to 108-2-4.
63 The prayer at the end of the *Āloka* appears in Wogihara, p.994; Haribhadra's explication of four *kāyas* in the same text occurs at length in Wogihara, pp. 914-926.

brief commentary, the *Saṃcaya-gāthā-pañjikā subhodinī*.[64] Therefore, Dharmamitra's remark that some Indian scholars of his time ascribed a text to Haribhadra which delineated three *kāyas* probably refers to *rP*, the revised version of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, and to its redaction by Haribhadra.

Why would Haribhadra make a redaction of the 25,000 *PP sūtra* which clearly delineates three *kāyas*, naming the three in its inserted titles, and then write two substantial commentaries in which he rejects the interpretation of *AA* chapter 8 as teaching three *kāyas*, asserting instead that it teaches four *kāyas?* In fact this makes more sense than it might appear. Haribhadra was the first scholiast to take on the prodigious task of writing extensive commentaries on the *AA* since the time of the Vimuktisenas. There is nothing more logical to do, as preparation for such a task, then to make for onesself a working copy of the Large *PP* sūtra which would contain all the topics and subtopics of the *AA* inserted as titles after their corresponding sūtra passages; in other words, to begin by making a reference guide to correspondences between the *AA* and the Large *PP sūtra*. The logical way to proceed was to base the redaction of this "reference guide" on Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, which identified all the correspondences between the *AA* and the Large *PP sūtra*, and which delineated three *kāyas*.

Haribhadra may well have written *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 into the *sūtra* to "restore it" to the form he thought it had when Ārya

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64 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 262-297; *Saṃcaya-gāthā-pañjikā subhodinī*, Pk 5190, 269-3-3.

Vimuktisena wrote his commentary, as a *sūtra* basis for the Ārya's remarks on *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya* (without noticing Ārya Vimuktisena's brief and easily missed, but quite specific statement that there is no sūtra basis for *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya* prior to *PP* passage VIII 5; see section 2.B.3 above). Having redacted *rP* as his reference manual, Haribhadra would then be prepared to compose his own commentaries (the *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā*) in which he introduces his own four *kāya* interpretation.

### 2.B.6. Terms and Concepts in Abhisamayālamkāra Chapter 8 Not Found in Prajñāpāramitā Passages VIII 4-VIII 5

We concluded above that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* author must have based the eighth chapter of his work on *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 (*PP* passages *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3 were added, we believe, no earlier than the late eighth century, quite possibly by Haribhadra himself, while the *AA* was composed sometime from the 4th to the early 6th century). We have therefore identified the actual sūtra basis for *AA* chapter 8 in *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5. What is the relation, then, between *AA* chapter 8 and those *PP* passages upon which it was actually based? *AA* chapter 8 specifically names and explains *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*, the *karma* (activity) of a Buddha, and makes mention of *dharmakāya*. What do *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 teach? Surprisingly, they do not

center on buddhahood, and do not specifically refer either to the *buddhakāyas* or to Buddha's activity at all!

*PP* passage VIII 4 explains how bodhisattvas use skill in means (*upāyakauśalya*) to lead living beings out of their suffering to enlightenment. This passage describes the paradox presented to us by a bodhisattva's skill in means. The bodhisattva, realizing the emptiness of all phenomena (dharmas), does not perceive any phenomena. Yet he uses his skill in means, his ability to teach living beings in ways appropriate to their own capacities, in order to lead them toward enlightenment. And that involves making the distinctions between virtuous and nonvirtuous dharmas, levels of practice, etc. necessary for disciples to progress on the spiritual path. Thus, although established in emptiness without discriminating phenomena, he makes distinctions between phenomena necessary to teach others.[65] *PP* passage VIII 4, then, does not even focus on buddhahood per se. It concerns the way in which bodhisattvas in general, while practicing and realizing emptiness, lead other beings out of misery and toward enlightenment.

Similarly, buddhahood per se is not the focus of *PP* passage VIII 5, although qualities of buddhahood are discussed as an adjunct matter. The primary teaching of *PP* VIII 5 concerns the *catvāri saṃgrahavastūni* (Tib. *bsdu ba'i dngos po bzhi*), the four ways in which bodhisattvas gather

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65 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section VIII 4. For Conze's English translation of the passage, see *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 573-576; *Gilgit Manuscript*, pp. 164-167; Tibetan translation in *rP*, Pk 731, fols. 134-5-3 to 137-2-4.

disciples.[66] The first of these four ways is the giving of gifts. According to *PP* VIII 5, bodhisattvas gather disciples by giving them material gifts, and the gift of dharma. The latter includes the gift of mundane dharma and the gift of supramundane dharma. He gives the gift of mundane dharma when he teaches all the practices and realizations shared by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. He gives the gift of supramundane dharma when he teaches all the practices and realizations disctinctive of the Buddhist path, which culminate in the achievement of all the undefiled dharmas (*anāsrava dharmas*) of a Buddha, as well as the 32 marks and 80 signs on a Buddha's body distinctive of a great person (*mahāpuruṣa*).

Thus, in *PP* passage VIII 5, buddhahood is nowhere a central topic, nor even a distinct or separate topic. Passage VIII 5 comprises a general discussion of the ways in which bodhisattvas recruit living beings as disciples and lead them to enlightenment, the most important of those ways being their gift of dharma. To explain that gift of dharma, the passage gives an inventory of all the practices and realizations of the Buddhist paths imparted by bodhisattvas to sentient beings. And within that inventory, included among many other practices and realizations, are the realizations and qualities of buddhahood itself. There is no mention of the *kāyas* of a Buddha, nor even specifically of a Buddha's activity. The numerous activities mentioned in the passage are carried out by bodhisattvas, the Buddha merely observing and describing what they do:

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66 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section VIII 5; *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 576-643, especially pp. 578-587; *Gilgit Manuscript* pp. 167-243; Tibetan: Pk 731, pp.137-2-4 to 187-3-3, especially pp. 139-1-1 to 145-5-5.

"Here, Subhuti, surveying the world with my Buddha-eye, I have seen in all directions in world systems countless like the sands of the Ganges, bodhisattvas who help men with the four means of gathering disciples....".[67] Consistent with much of the rest of the *PP* sūtra, *PP* passage VIII 5 describes the activities of bodhisattvas who are engaged in the practice of *prajñāpāramitā* conjoined with skill in means. It is not specifically describing the activities of a Buddha at all.

*PP* passage VIII 5's mention of a Buddha's qualities, then, is merely ancillary to its teaching of bodhisattva practice: Buddha qualities being among the many qualities a bodhisattva helps sentient beings to acquire. This textual material must have provided a meager basis for the author of the *AA* to use in his composition of chapter 8. He had explained the entire Mahāyāna path to enlightenment in the *AA*'s first seven chapters. All that remained to be explained was the fruit of that path. This was the purpose of his 8th chapter. But after he had used most of the Large *PP* Sūtra as textual basis for his first seven chapters, the only passages which remained, *PP* VIII 4 and VIII 5, simply did not take buddhahood per se as their focus.

Still, contained within those passages were the list of undefiled Buddha dharmas found throughout the *PP* sūtras as a phenomenal expression of Buddha's mental qualities. Also contained in those passages was a list of the 32 marks and 80 signs of the *mahāpuruṣa*, ascribed to the form of a Buddha.[68] Such lists of undefiled dharmas and marks and

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67 Conze, *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, p. 578 ff.

68 Conze, *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 580-587.

signs were common *PP* sūtra expressions of buddhahood as understood on the phenomenal or conventional level (see section 2B..5 above) Therefore, the author of the *AA* found in passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 the standard *PP* sūtra conventional expressions of buddhahood, the undefiled dharmas and the marks and signs. Those, combined with a reinterpretation of the bodhisattvas' activities in passage VIII 5 as activities of Buddha's emanations, provided a sufficient *PP* textual basis for a discussion of buddhahood in *AA* chapter 8.

### 3. Abhisamayālamkāra Chapter 8 Represents an Attempt in Indian Buddhism, for the First Time, to Correlate the 3 Kāyas of Yogācāra with the Descriptions of Enlightenment in the Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra

If *AA* chapter 8 were based on *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, which so explicitly delineated three or more *kāyas*, we would follow late Indian and Tibetan scholars in concluding that *AA* chapter 8 must be teaching whatever number of *kāyas* those passages taught. But *AA* 8 was not based on them. It was based on *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5. And those passages presented the same kind of list of Buddha dharmas and made mention of the marks and signs which were to be found presented over and over throughout the *PP* sūtras. In explicating them, *AA* 8 was explicating the *PP* sūtras' most common way of describing buddhahood in phenomenal terms. But, importantly, *AA* chapter 8, without any basis

within the *PP* sūtra, used the specific terms "*svābhāvikakāya*", "*sāmbhogikakāya*", and "*nairmāṇikakāya*" and structured its entire exposition of buddhahood around those very terms. These terms and concepts, which do not appear in the *PP* sūtras at all, had to have been drawn from other sources. We have dated the *AA* from some time in the 4th century to the early 6th century CE. The only contemporaneous sources from which it could have drawn such terminology are Yogācāra.

The theory of *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*, as we have seen, was one of the fundamental concepts developed in Yogācāra circles and articulated in Yogācāra texts such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, etc. discussed at length in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. The three *kāya* theory was formed within a Yogācāra intellectual milieu and found clear and well-delineated expression for the first time in *śāstras* such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, etc. which appeared from the 3rd to the 6th century CE. This model of three *kāyas* was understood and framed entirely in relation to other important Yogācāra models of enlightenment: *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, *tathatāviśuddhi/nirvikalpajñāna*, etc., and in relation to Yogācāra theories of yogic practice and gnoseology (see chapters 4 and 5 above).

In the Yogācāra presentation of the three *kāya* theory, the *svābhāvikakāya* is identified with *dharmakāya* as the very essence of buddhahood (comprising the perfected non-dual realization of suchness and nonconceptual gnosis; refer back to chapter 4, sections 4 and 5 above). The *dharmakāya* is described in Yogācāra texts, from a

phenomenal point-of-view, in terms of the undefiled Buddha dharmas, but it is not "defined" by them, i.e. is not identified as them, the reason being that the *dharmakāya* is not adequately captured by a set of conceptually differentiated terms and concepts, being a non-conceptual realization of the emptiness of all such terms and concepts (chapter 4, section 2 above). As we shall discuss further in the next chapter, *AA* vss 8.1-8.6 fully reflect that basic Yogācāra mode of expression. But because the *AA* author's task always required his commentary to be grounded within the textual material of the Large *PP* sūtra itself, his exposition of *svābhāvikakāya* required him to give the list of undefiled dharmas much greater prominence than was required by Yogācāra authors in texts such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, etc.

Along similar lines, the *AA*'s author, in *AA* vs. 8.12, specifically links the Yogācāra term and concept "*sāmbhogikakāya*" to the *PP* textual material in passage VIII 5 which lists the 32 marks and 80 signs of a Buddha's form.[69] Then he expounds the *PP* material on the marks and signs at greater length in vss. 8.13 to 8.32. Similarly, at *AA* vs. 8.33, the author takes the Yogācāra term "*nairmāṇikakāya*" and links it to the *PP* textual material in passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 where bodhisattvas carry out extensive activities for sentient beings.[70] Then he expounds the *PP*

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[69] Conze, *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, pp. 583-587.

[70] Conze, *Large Sūtra*, Motilal edition, passage VIII 5, pp. 576 ff., in which the Buddha surveys the universe and describes his observation of countless bodhisattvas going out in all directions and entering into all realms of beings to carry out activities for their benefit. The *AA's* author, interpreting the textual material in *PP* passage VIII 5 as a basis for the Yogācāra concept "*nairmāṇikakāya*," appears to have simply designated the activites of the bodhisattvas in passage VIII 5 as activities of Buddha's emanations (*nirmāṇa*, *AA* vs. 8.33).

textual material on those activities at greater length from vss. 8.34 to 8.40.

The structure and pattern of *AA* chapter 8, then, is quite clear. The *AA*'s author first makes an explicit linkage between each *kāya* term of the Yogācāra tradition and the textual material of a corresponding *PP* passage. He does this with one verse (vs. 8.1, vs. 8.12, vs. 8.33, vs. 8.34). Then he details the content of the *PP* passage with a further set of several or many verses (see chapter 6 of this thesis for the relevant *AA* verses). *AA* vs. 8.1 links the Yogācāra "*svābhāvikakāya*" with the undefiled Buddha dharmas of *PP* passage VIII 5. Then, vss. 8.2-8.6 specify at greater length the content of the Buddha dharmas, as taught in the *PP* passage. *AA* vs. 8.12 links the Yogācāra "*sāmbhogikakāya*" with the marks and signs found in *PP* passage VIII 5. Then, vss. 8.13-8.32 detail those marks and signs as they are described in the *PP* passage. *AA* vs. 8.33 links the Yogācāra "*nairmāṇikakāya*" with the bodhisattvas carrying out various activities for sentient beings in *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5. Then, vss. 8.34-8.40 detail those activities as described in those *PP* passages.[71] It is quite clear that the *AA*'s author either drew his *kāya* terminology from Yogācāra texts (such as the *MSA*), or he drew it from the substratum of ideas which gave rise to such texts.[72]

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[71] *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5: Conze, *Large Sutra*, Motilal Edition, pp. 573-643. *AA* verses are translated in chapter 6 of this thesis. The AA's internal structure, and its pattern of aligning Yogācāra concepts to *PP* passages will be further detailed in the next chapter.

[72] As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the *AA* sometimes superimposed schema for the Buddhist path onto the *PP*, schema which must have been an accepted part of Mahayana thought during the period of the *AA's* composition, but may not have been prominent at the earlier period when the *PP* sūtras were formed. Some of these schema

The author of *AA* 8, then, by explicating *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5's lists of Buddha qualities, was explaining the way the *PP* sūtras *generally* talked about buddhahood. And, simultaneously, he was linking this to the way Yogācāra texts generally talked about buddhahood. What he was seeking to explain, then, was not just the meaning of a few short *PP* passages (such as *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3), but rather the relationship between the different ways buddhahood was generally described in two of the main Mahāyāna textual traditions of his time, the *PP* sūtras and the Yogācāra śāstras.

This presents us with a basic question. Why did the *AA*'s author feel called upon to include in the 8th chapter of his work both *PP* and Yogācāra terminology? Why wasn't he content, in composing that chapter, to write a few verses describing the Buddha qualities as they are presented in the *PP* sūtra, and to leave it at that? The only way to approach such questions, its seems to me, is to look at the *AA* in its historical context; to try to see, at least in part, what role it may have played in the development of Buddhist thought during the period in history in which it was composed.

Let us look at what the author of the *AA* was faced with as he sat down to compose his 8th chapter. Having versified the entire Mahāyāna path, it was time to write his verses on the ultimate fruit of that path,

are distinctly Yogācāran. For example, the similes for the 22 types of *bodhicitta*, are not mentioned within the *PP* sūtras. *AA* verses 1.18-20 superimpose them over the *PP* (Conze, *Large Sūtra*, pp. 46-53), and a similar list is found in the *MSA* (verses 4.14-20), a Yogācāra work. Conze has noted other places in the *AA* where Yogācāra ideas are superimposed over the *PP* material (*PP Literature*, pp. 102-104). But nowhere is this more evident than in *AA* chapter 8, where the terminology of multiple kāyas found in the principle Yogācāra texts (MSA, Msg, etc.) is superimposed onto *PP* material.

buddhahood. He was presumably very much aware that, in his time (ca. 4th to early 6th century CE), there were two principal ways within Mahāyāna Buddhism to describe buddhahood. One was the theory of three kāyas articulated by Yogācāras (and also fundamental to the *tathāgatagarbha* theory as it took expression in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*). The other was the older corpus of buddhological teachings found in Abhidharma and in the *PP* sūtras, which included lists of undefiled dharmas (*anāsrava dharmas*), the 32 marks and 80 signs of the *mahāpuruṣa*, and occasional references to "*dharmakāya*" or "*rupakāya*". The Yogācāra three *kāya* theory was gaining more and more prominence in this period, appearing as it does in the *MSA*, *Msg*, *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, *DDV*, *RGV*, etc., all thought to be composed prior to or within the same period as the AA. Within the history of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism to this point, nobody had explicitly related the buddhology of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* to the increasingly popular and influential Yogācāra descriptions. Were the *PP sūtras* and the Yogācāras talking about the same state of enlightenment, or not? Surely the author of the *AA* would want to say that they were. The *PP* comprised perhaps the most fundamental and, in Mahāyāna circles, the most universally accepted collection of *sūtras*. As far as we know, no established Mahāyāna school thought of its buddhology as divorced from or in conflict with that of the *PP sūtras*. But this would mean that what the *PP* referred to in terms of "undefiled Buddha dharmas", "marks and signs", "*dharmakāya*", and "*rupakāya*" must be the same thing that the Yogācāras referred to in terms of "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," and "*nairmāṇikakāya*." The

obvious question would then be: how do the two descriptions correspond? Which items in the *PP* expressions of buddhahood correspond to each of the three *kāyas*? At the time that the *AA* was composed, it is this question which its author surely had to address.

A number of modern scholars, Conze, Dutt, Poussin, Obermiller and others have reported that *AA* chapter 8 teaches 4 *kāyas* (Conze, PP *Literature*, p. 103; Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p.155; Poussin, *Siddhi*, pp. 790-791; Obermiller, *Analysis of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, pp.11-12). Conze, Dutt and Poussin probably based their remarks on the pioneering work of Obermiller, who himself relied on Tibetan commenators who followed Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. But Haribhadra and his followers in India and Tibet looked at the *AA* from a perspective many centuries removed from the time of its composition. If the *AA* did teach 4 *kāyas*, it would have been proposing a new theory, one which had not yet been explicitly worked out in either Yogācāra or *PP* sources.[73] But it seems doubtful that that kind of new development would occur so abruptly. Never before in the history of Buddhist thought had a *PP* commentator explicitly related the buddhology of the *PP sūtras* to that of the Yogācāras. Would he begin by making a new theory? It is much more likely that he would begin by seeking to find the correspondence between the two theories already at hand. If this line of reasoning is

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[73] If the *AA* did teach 4 *kāyas* as Haribhadra understood them, then its author would have been reinterpreting the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" in particular, giving it a meaning different from that found in Yogācāra texts. See chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis on *svābhāvikakāya* in Yogācāra, and chapter 10 below on Haribhadra's interpretation of *svābhāvikakāya*.

correct, then the author's intention in *AA* chapter 8 was to explain which of the terms and concepts in the *PP sūtras* corresponded to each of the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra, i.e. to show how they matched up. His task was to map Yogācāra terms and concepts onto *PP* terms and concepts. This would mean that the *AA* was indeed a three *kāya* text, mapping the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra onto the Large *PP sūtra*.

Is there support for this conclusion among any of the *AA*'s commentators? Do any of them understand *AA* chapter 8 to constitute such a mapping? In fact, this is precisely how Ārya Vimuktisena understood that chapter. He specified the *AA's* textual basis for *svābhāvikakāya* as *PP* passage VIII 5's listing of the undefiled Buddha dharmas, the *AA's* textual basis for *sāmbhogikakāya* as *PP* VIII.5's listing of the marks and signs, the *AA's* textual basis for *nairmāṇikakāya* in *PP* VIII.5's descriptions of limitless bodhisattvas pervading the universe, and the *AA's* textual basis for Buddha *karma* in the activities carried out by those bodhisattvas. In sum, Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary identifies the *svābhāvikakāya* of Yogācāra with the *dharmakāya* of the *PP sūtras* (as expressed in *PP* passage VIII 5 in terms of the list of undefiled Buddha dharmas); the *sāmbhogikakāya* of Yogācāra with the form body possessed of marks and signs in *PP* passage VIII 5 ; the *nairmāṇikakāya* of Yogācāra with the infinite bodhisattvas of *PP* passage VIII 5 (understood as emanations of Buddha working for beings).[74] In other words, for

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[74] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, on *PP* textual basis of *svābhāvikakāya*: fols. 92-5-6 ff., 98-4-6 to 98-4-7, on *sāmbhogikakāya*: fols. 96-2-5 ff., 97-4-5 ff., and 98-4-6 to 98-4-7, on *nairmāṇikakāya* and *karma*: fols. 98-5-1 ff., 99-1-4 ff. See also the remarks above on Ārya Vimuktisena's identification of *PP* passage VIII 5 as the source of the

Ārya Vimuktisena, *AA* chapter 8 was precisely a mapping of the three Yogācāra *kāyas* onto corresponding passages of the Large *PP sūtra*.

We will examine Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary in greater detail in chapter 9 of this thesis. But it is useful at this juncture to take notice of his interpretation. Our conclusion that *AA* chapter 8 constitutes an attempt to map the 3*kāyas* of Yogācāra onto the Large *PP sūtra* is based on text-critical and historical considerations, and is therefore necessarily somewhat speculative. But, as it happens, it is supported by Ārya Vimuktisena, the first and perhaps the greatest *AA* commentator whose work is extant. And his interpretation continued to be the standard one in India for several hundred years after his time.[75]

We conclude, then, that *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 was not newly presenting a theory of 4 *kāyas*, as many have claimed, but was instead performing a far more pressing task at the time it was composed: to show, for the first time, the relation between the *PP* descriptions of buddhahood and the Yogācāra descriptions. According to this theory, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* teaches three *kāyas*. But it does so somewhat differently from other texts of its time, because rather than expounding

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*AA's* teaching on *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*. In fols. 98-5-1 ff., Ārya Vimuktisena explains first that the *nairmāṇikakāya* is the infinite assemblage of emanations emitted by the *dharmakayaphalaṃ* (resultant *dharmakāya*, buddhahood) to work for the benefit of beings in the ten directions. Then he quotes and paraphrases *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 to show that the bodhisattvas described in those passages are such emanations, and that their activities are therefore the activities of the *dharmakayaphalaṃ*, the Buddha, carried out by his *nairmāṇikakāya*. All of this will be discussed at greater length in chapter 9 of this thesis.

[75] As far as we know, Haribhadra, (late eighth to early ninth century CE) was the first to revise this interpretation by newly proposing that the *AA* taught not three but four *kāyas*. Ārya Vimuktisena is dated to the early 6th century.

the three *kāya* theory strictly within the framework of Yogācāra practise and theory (as in the *MSA*, *Msg*, etc.), it tries to show how the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra are tacitly expressed in *PP* passages which make no explicit mention of them. If this theory is correct, we might expect to find more evidence within the structure and language of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* itself to support our claim that it represents a mapping of Yogācāra concepts onto the Large *PP sūtra*, and therefore teaches three rather than four *kāyas*. In fact, there is a great deal more evidence within the overall structure and Sanskrit terminology of the *AA*, and we will take it up in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER VIII

# INTERNAL EVIDENCE THAT ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA CHAPTER 8 TEACHES THREE KĀYAS

## 1. Preliminary Remarks: Prajñāpāramitā and Yogācāra Patterns of Theory Which Have Direct Bearing on the Analysis of AA Chapter 8

Based on text-critical and historical considerations, we concluded in the last chapter that *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 represented an attempt, for the first time in Indian Buddhism, to correlate the Yogācāra theory of 3 *kāyas* with the expressions of enlightenment found in the *PP sūtras*. In this chapter, we will analyze in detail the structure and Sanskrit terminology of the *AA* to show how it provides corroboration for our conclusion.

We identified *AA* chapter 8's textual basis in the passages of the Large *PP sūtra* (particularly the version in 25,000 verses) which are numbered "VIII 4" and "VIII 5" by Conze in his various editions of that text.[1] And

[1] Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 573-643. We noted that Conze inadvertently misnumbered these passages, because he mistakenly based his numbering system on *rP*, the revised edition of the 25,000 *PP sūtra*, which, as we determined, was not composed until well after the *AA*. *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3, which were not part of the *PP sūtra* when the *AA* was composed, can not be textual bases for its 8th chapter. So we are left with the *PP* passages now inappropriately numbered "VIII 4" and "VIII 5" as the sole textual

we found that *AA* chapter 8 was structured around key *kāya* terms drawn from Yogācāra traditions contemporary to the *AA's* period of composition in India. Since *AA* chapter 8 represents a conjoining of two textual traditions (the *PP* and the Yogācāra), we should begin by briefly reviewing our findings thusfar on the pattern of buddhological concepts found in those two textual traditions. Then we will examine *AA's* 8th chapter in the light of those patterns.

In chapter 3, we found that the *PP sūtras'* most frequent way of expressing buddhahood was through their frequent listing of the all-dharmas (understood in Abhidharma traditions to comprise the mental and physical universe), included amongst which were the undefiled Buddha dharmas (the ten powers, four fearlessnesses, etc. which are the pure mental qualities of a Buddha). This sort of listing, as we noted, did not center on buddhahood per se. In fact, it was often employed for the purpose of denying the self-existence (*svabhāva*) of every dharma listed (including the Buddha dharmas). All dharmas were declared "empty" (*śūnya*) of self-existence, since they were understood to be dependent on causes, and distinguished only through conceptual construction. It was this emptiness (*śūnyatā*), often called "suchness" (*tathatā*), together with the non-dual realization of it (*prajñāpāramitā*), which was identified as "*dharmakāya*." For this reason, the *dharmakāya*, as the quintessence of enlightenment, is never directly identified in the *PP sūtras as* the collection of Buddha dharmas per se. Rather the *dharmakāya* is identified

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bases for *AA* chapter 8. Had Conze known all this, he probably would have just designated them together as "VIII," ie. as the sole *PP* basis of *AA* chapter 8.

as the emptiness of all dharmas (including the Buddha dharmas) together with the perfect realization of that emptiness, *prajñāpāramitā* (the perfection of wisdom).[2] The list of Buddha dharmas in the *PP sūtra*, then, comprising a conceptually constructed set, represents a conventional or phenomenal expression of buddhahood whose essence is ultimately *dharmakāya*. In sum, the *dharmakāya* of the *PP sūtras*, as it comes under the discursive consideration of non-Buddhas, is conceived as a set of undefiled dharmas (the ten powers, four fearlessnesses, etc.), but as directly realized by a Buddha, is actually beyond such conceptualization. In the *PP*, though *dharmakāya* may be phenomenally described or denominated in terms of the undefiled dharmas, it is never identified with them.

As noted in the previous chapter, *PP* passage VIII 5, like so many other *PP* passages, lists the undefiled Buddha dharmas. It presents them amongst a large set of other dharmas (qualities) which bodhisattvas are said to impart to sentient beings through their teaching.[3] There is no specific reference to "*dharmakāya*" in passage VIII 5, but the usage of the term as explained above is established in other parts of the Large *PP sūtra* (see chapter 3 of this thesis).

Identified in the introductory passages of the Large *PP sūtra* is its expounder, Śākyamuni Buddha. He appears in the Large *PP* in an

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[2] On *PP* statements concerning the emptiness of all dharmas, and *dharmakāya* as that emptiness and its realization (not as the *buddha dharmas* per se), see chapter 3 of this thesis and its annotations.

[3] Conze, *Large Sutra*, Motilal Edition, pp. 580-583, 654-656. See also chapter 7 of this thesis, section II.b.5.

especially exalted form, radiating light throughout the universe, preaching to limitless throngs of disciples, and, in some passages, miraculously radiating limitless emanations of Buddha forms which preach in all realms of sentient beings (Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 37-44, see also pp. 1-5). In the *PP*, all such forms, including both the exalted central expounder of the *sūtra* and his limitless emanations, are designated simply "*rūpakāya*," the "form body" of Buddha (see chapter 3).

In Large *PP* passage VIII 5, an especially exalted quality of a Buddha's form is identified as the 32 marks and 80 signs of the *mahāpuruṣa*. These exalted marks and signs are included in passage VIII 5 amongst the general list of Buddha dharmas (Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 583-587, and pp. 657-665). Within the context of the *PP*, the marks and signs would be associated with the "*rūpakāya*" (no formal distinction of "*sāmbhogikakāya*" and "*nairmāṇikakāya*" was yet made in the *PP*). Also described at length in *PP* passage VIII 5 are limitless activities of bodhisattvas, whom the Buddha observes as they enter into all realms of beings to teach and assist them (*Large Sutra*, pp. 576 ff.).

In chapters 4 and 5 above, we discussed the Yogācāra pattern of buddhological concepts. The Yogācāra framework of buddhology builds on that of the *PP* and other Mahāyāna *sūtras*, but is also based on specific Yogācāra theories of gnoseology and yogic praxis. In the Yogācāra 6-fold scheme of buddhological categories, the essence of buddhahood is the first category: "*svabhāva*," which is purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) and non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). This is the *dharmakāya*, which is the "body of the Buddhas in its very essence ("*svābhāvika*"), and

which is therefore called "*svābhāvikakāya*" (the Body in its Essence; see chapter 4, sections 3 and 4). The *svābhāvikakāya*, upon being introduced in Yogācāra texts, is immediately identified as the *dharmakāya*, taken as buddhahood in its very essence (chapter 4 section 4). The texts explicitly state, however, that the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* can not be "defined" in terms of the set of Buddha dharmas (the same set found in the *PP sūtras*). The reason is that the defining quality of buddhahood, its essence (which is *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*), is its non-dual realization of the emptiness of all phenomena, including all phenomena traditionally ascribed to buddhahood (chapter 4 section 2). The set of Buddha dharmas, then, comprises only a phenomenal description of buddhahood, and for that reason is categorized in the Yogācāra 6-fold scheme as "*yoga*" ("endowment," phenomenally ascribed qualities), not as "*svabhāva*" (essence, which is *svābhāvikakāya*; see chapter 4 section 3). Thus, like the *PP sūtras*, Yogācāra texts acknowledge the set of Buddha dharmas as a phenomenal description of enlightenment which denominates the *dharmakāya* from a phenomenal point-of-view. But the *dharmakāya* (=*svābhāvikakāya*) is not to be identified with that set, being beyond such conceptual differentiation.

We also noted that Yogācāras routinely use the term "*dharmakāya*" in two senses: one exclusive, the other inclusive. The exclusive sense is that presented just above, where *dharmakāya* is specifically identified as the *svābhāvikakāya*, i.e. where *dharmakāya* is identified exclusively as the first of the three Yogācāra *kāyas*. The inclusive sense of the term "*dharmakāya*" refers to buddhahood in its entirety, including all *kāyas*, all

of a Buddha's activities, etc. The inclusive sense of the word hearkens back to Abhidharma descriptions of *dharmakāya* as *phalasampad*, which is the resultant, final attainment of the path, buddhahood in its entirety (see chapter 2 of this thesis). It is the inclusive sense of *dharmakāya* which appears in the expression of *AA* vs. 9.2, "*dharmakāya phalam*," referring to buddhahood as the total result of the paths, including all *kāyas*, activities, etc. (noted in chapter 6 of this thesis). It is also the inclusive sense which appears in *AA* vs. 1.4 where "*dharmakāya*" is given as the subject title for the *AA's* entire 8th chapter (see chapter 6). The Yogācāra tradition, then, identifies *dharmakāya* in the exclusive sense with the *svābhāvikakāya*, which, though describable phenomenally in terms of the undefiled Buddha dharmas, is not to be equated with them. It identifies the *dharmakāya* in the inclusive sense with buddhahood in its entirety, equivalent to the set of all three *kāyas*, to *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, to *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, and the other Yogācāra models of buddhahood (see chapter 4, section 5 above).

We noted in chapters 4 and 5 that the Yogācāra texts formally distinguished, for the first time, the exalted, cosmic Buddha figures(who were often the expounders of Mahāyāna *sūtras*) from the infinite emanations which such figures radiated into the realms of beings. The exalted, central figures in the *sūtras* were designated "*sāmbhogikakāya*" (the Body in its Shared Enjoyment, because it shared its enjoyment of the spiritual truth with the bodhisattvas to whom it taught the *sūtra*, see chapter 5, section 5). The infinite emanations were designated "*nairmāṇikakāya*" (the Body in its Emanation). Out of the 3 *kāyas*, it was

the *nairmāṇikakāya* which came to be the most closely identified in Yogācāra texts with the activity (*karma*) of buddhahood in general, presumably because such an infinite range of activity was ascribed to it, spanning the whole universe and all realms of beings (chapter 5, section 5).

Finally, we noted in chapter 4, section 4 the special purpose of the morphology of the 3 *kāya* names, names which characteristically appear in *taddhita*, adjectival form. The *taddhita* forms are "*svābhāvika,*" "*sāmbhogika,*" and "*nairmāṇika*" (as opposed to the *kṛt* forms often mentioned in Western scholarship: "*svabhāva(kāya),*" "*sambhoga(kāya),*" "*nirmāṇa(kāya*")). We noted that these *taddhita* forms had an important adjectival function. They modify the noun "*kāya,*" where "*kāya*" refers to enlightenment as a single, undifferentiated, ultimate realization (it is identified in *MSA* vss. 9.59-9.60 and *bhāṣya* both as "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*" and as "the *kāya* of the Buddhas,"). The *taddhita* forms of the key terms make them adjectives, designating three operative modes of "the *kāya.*"

The *taddhita* morphology of the three *kāya* names, then, emphasizes the ultimate oneness of buddhahood as it was conceived in the Yogācāra tradition. Buddhahood was understood primarily as one, undifferentiated and ultimate realization (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, *tathatāviśuddhi-nirvikalpajñāna*, *dharmakāya*) referred to as "the *kāya* of the Buddhas." That *kāya,* in its essence (*svābhāvika*), is the *svābhāvikakāya* (the Body in its Essence); as it manifests to share enjoyment (*sāmbhogika*) of the dharma with saints, is *sāmbhogikakāya* (the Body in its Shared

Enjoyment); and as it manifests in infinite emanations (*nairmāṇika*) to act for beings, is *nairmāṇikakāya* (the Body as Emanation: see chapter 4, section 4).

The important point to keep in mind when interpreting *AA* chapter 8 is this: In the Yogācāra tradition from which the *AA* drew its *kāya* terminology, buddhahood was not to be defined in terms of any collection or set of diverse qualities (including the undefiled Buddha dharmas), but rather as a single, undifferentiated ultimate realization ("the *kāya*"). That undifferentiated realization was understood to be operative under three modes: as it is in its essence (*svābhāvika*), in its enjoyment (*sāmbhogika*), and in its emanation (*nairmāṇika*). The *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, as the essence of buddhahood, was therefore never directly identified as the set differentiated Buddha dharmas per se. Rather, the Buddha dharmas, like the form bodies, were understood to be merely the phenomenal expression of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as it came under the conceptual categories of beings.

The patterns of buddhological concepts within the *PP sūtras* and the Yogācāra literature have been encapsulated above because they are all so fundamental toward an interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. And it is to that interpretation that we now turn.

2. AA Chapter 8's Table of Contents: AA vs. 1.17

We begin by examining the table of contents for *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8, *AA* vs. 1.17:

> *svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
> *dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//*[4] *AA* 1.17

We noted in chapter 6 that Ārya Vimuktisena had interpreted this verse as teaching 3 Buddha *kāyas* (represented by the terms "*svābhāvikaḥ,*" "*sasāmbhogo,*" and "*nairmāṇiko*") while Haribhadra interpreted it as teaching four Buddha *kāyas* (three *kāyas* designated by those three terms, plus a fourth *kāya* designated by the term "*dharmakāyaḥ,*" referring to the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*). We will now proceed with our own analysis, and then give a translation for the verse.[5]

Note that the first three terms are adjectival in form. "*Svābhāvikaḥ*" and "*nairmāṇikaḥ*" are in the familiar *taddhita* form, while "*sa,*" as a possessive prefix attached to "*sāmbhogaḥ,*" gives that term a broadly adjectival function ("*sasāmbhogaḥ,*" meaning "with enjoyment," should modify something possessing the enjoyment). As noted above, the

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[4] Amano, 1975, p. 16. Amano, 1983, p. 5. I refer the reader also to chapter 6 of this thesis where *AA* chapter 8 and related verses are presented and translated.

[5] In the analysis of the grammar of *AA* vs. 1.17 which follows, I was helped immeasurably by Ven. Ngawang Samten of the Tibetan Institute in Sarnath, Varanasi, who gave me insightful feedback for my interpretations. In my analyses of the Sanskrit of the *AA* throughout this chapter, I was also greatly helped through numerous conversations with Ven. Ngawang Samten, Professor Ram Śaṅkar Tripāṭhī of Varanasi Sanskrit University, and Professor Sempa Dorje of the Tibetan Institute, from whom I was imparted much love for Sanskrit, and much appreciation for its complications. Needless to say, any errors are my own.

placing of key *kāya* terms into *taddhita* form to give them a broad adjectival function is characteristic of their usage in the Yogācāra texts which first developed the terminology (see chapter 4, section 4). The term "*sakāritraḥ*" is also in a possessive, adjectival form. Reading the verse most simply and straightforwardly, all four terms: "*svābhāvikaḥ*," "*sasāmbhogo*," "*nairmāṇikaḥ*," and "*sakāritraḥ*" are in an adjectival form which indicates that they modify some noun in the verse. The fifth key term, "*dharmakāyaḥ*," is the only simple noun in the verse. It is a singular noun in nominative case. It is the only noun which the other four terms could modify. Taken together, then, the five terms translate something like this : "The *dharmakāya*, in its essence (*svābhāvikaḥ*), with its enjoyment (*sasāmbhogo*), in its emanation (*nairmāṇiko*), [and] with its activity (*sakāritraś*). ..."

The verb of the verse, *samudīritaḥ*, is a past passive participle. It can be translated "is proclaimed." Importantly, this verb is singular in number, not plural. It should modify a singular noun. Again, *dharmakāya* is the only simple, singular noun it could modify ("The *dharmakāya* ... is proclaimed.") The term *caturdhā* is an adverb, meaning "four-fold." The phrase "*aparas tathā*" means "and so the other," "the other as well," etc. If we take the Sanskrit itself as our basis (apart from any commentaries), the verse translates most directly and simply as follows:

> In its essence, with its enjoyment, and in its emanation as well,
> The Dharma Body, with its activity, is proclaimed as four-fold.
> *AA* 1.17

Such an understanding makes sense if the term "*dharmakāya*" ("Dharma Body") is understood in its inclusive sense (as the *dharmakāya phalam* of *AA* vss. 9.2 and 1.4), i.e. as the final result of the Mahāyāna path, buddhahood in its entirety, inclusive of all *kāyas*, enlightened activity, etc. Then in this verse, "*dharmakāya*" refers simply to undifferentiated buddhahood, "the *kāya* of the Buddhas," in which are distinguished its three operative modes (*svābhāvika*, *sāmbhogika*, and *nairmāṇika*) and its enlightened activity, proclaiming it "as four-fold."

We interpret *AA* vs. 1.17, then, as another expression of the three *kāya* theory prominent in other texts of its period, discussed above in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. Besides straightforward considerations of the Sanskrit which lead to the translation above, there is a great deal of further evidence to support our interpretation.

Let us compare *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* vss. 9.59, 9.60 and *bhāṣya* to *AA* vs. 1.17 above (the reader may want to refer also to chapter 4, section 4 of this thesis):

> *svabhāvadharmasaṃbhoganirmāṇairbhinnavṛttikaḥ/*
> *dharmadhāturviśuddho 'yam buddhānāṃ samudāhṛtaḥ/*
> *MSA* 9.59

> This is declared to be the purified dharma realm (*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*) of the Buddhas, whose mode of operation is divided from [the point of view of] essence, shared enjoyment of dharma, and emanation.

*eṣa vṛttyarthamārabhya caturthaḥ ślokaḥ/*
*svābhāvikasāṃbhogikanairmāṇikakāyavṛttyā bhinnavṛttikaḥ/*
MSA 9.59 *bhāṣya*

This fourth verse concerns mode of operation (*vṛtti*) as the topic. The mode of operation is differentiated through the *kāya's* operational mode in its very essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation.

*svābhāviko 'tha sāṃbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko 'paraḥ/*
*kāyabhedā hi buddhānām prathamastu dvayāśrayaḥ/* MSA 9.60

Thus the divisions of the *kāya* (body) of the Buddhas are: the *kāya* in its essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation as well. But the first is the basis of the [other] two.

*trividhaḥ kāyo buddhānām/ svābhāviko dharmakāya āśrayaparāvṛttilakṣaṇaḥ/ sāṃbhogiko yena parṣanmaṇḍaleṣu dharmasaṃbhogaṃ karoti/ nairmāṇiko yena nirmāṇena sattvārthaṃ karoti/* MSA 9.60 *bhāṣya*

The *kāya* of the Buddhas is threefold, [being]: 1. In essence (*svābhāvika*), the *dharmakāya*, whose characteristic is fundamental transformation. 2. in shared enjoyment (*sāṃbhogika*), that through which it brings enjoyment of dharma to the circles of assembly. 3. in its emanation (*nairmāṇika*), the emanation through which it works for the benefit of beings.

In these passages, the *kāya* of the Buddhas, which is identified as *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* (purified suchness, undifferentiated buddhahood), is ascribed three operational modes (*vṛtti*) which are designated through the adjectival (*taddhita*) forms of the three *kāya* names.

Let us look closely at *AA* vs. 1.17 as it compares to *MSA* vs. 9.60 above:

*svābhāviko 'tha sāmbhogyaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko 'paraḥ/*
*kāyabhedā hi buddhānām prathamastu dvayāśrayaḥ/* *MSA* 9.60

*svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
*dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//* *AA* 1.17

In *AA* vs. 1.17, the term "*dharmakāya*" takes the place of the *MSA* term "*kāya buddhānām.*" As we saw in chapters 4 and 5 above, the term "*dharmakāya*," when used in its inclusive sense, is equivalent to "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*" "*kāya buddhānām,*" and other such terms which denote undifferentiated buddhahood as a whole. In *MSA* 9.60, adjectival forms of the three *kāya* terms modify the term "*kāya*" in the first half-verse, which is an abbreviation for "*kāya buddhānām*" of the second half-verse. In *AA* vs. 1.17, the adjectival forms of the three *kāya* terms modify the term "*dharmakāya.*" The parallelism is clear: three adjectival forms modify a term for undifferentiated buddhahood, thereby designating its three operational modes: the three-fold *kāya.*

The phrase "*aparas tathā*" in *AA* vs. 1.17 parallels the phrase "*atha ...aparaḥ*" in *MSA* 9.60. In both cases the term "*aparaḥ*" ("as well") serves to mark off the three *kāya* terms as a complete set ("... in its essence, in its shared enjoyment, and in its emanation *as well*"). Sthiramati, in his comments on *MSA* vs. 9.60, discusses the function of the term "*aparaḥ*" in the verse. He notes that the term is intended to designate the inclusion of the *nairmāṇikakāya* with the first two *kāyas* to complete the set of three.[6] The phrase "*aparas tathā*" also appears in a similar half-verse at the beginning of the *Kāyatrayāvatāramukhaśāstra*, a

6 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fol. 136a1.

text extant in the Tibetan canon which explicitly teaches three *kāyas* in some detail (Pk 5290, ascribed to a Nāgamitra).[7] This text names the first of the three *kāyas*: "*dharmakāya*" (rather than "*svābhāvikakāya*"), a usage not uncommon in later Yogācāra texts (see chapter 4, section 5 above). It opens with a half-verse similar to *MSA* 9.60 and *AA* 1.17: "*sprul dang longs spyod rdzogs pa dang/ de bzhin gzhan ni chos sku ste/,*" which might be reconstructed into Sanskrit as: "*nairmāṇikaśca sāmbhogyo dharmakāyo 'paras tathā/,*" translated: "In its emanation, in its shared enjoyment, and also [simply] as *dharmakāya....*" (here "*dharmakāya*" is used in its exclusive sense as a synonym for "*svābhāvikakāya,*" as was often the case in later Yogācāra literature, cf. chapter 4, sec. 5 above). In all the verses under discussion, the term "*aparaḥ*" is used to mark off the three terms designating the three *kāyas* as a complete set, i.e. to indicate that there are precisely three, no less and no more.

In verse *MSA* 9.60 and the verse from the *Kāyatrayāvatāramukhaśāstra*, then, we see terms designating the three *kāyas* specificially arranged in the space of a half-verse in such a way so as to indicate their constituting a complete set. This seems to represent some sort of established syntactical pattern in the Yogācāra textual tradition for specifying three *kāyas* as a set. *AA* vs. 1.17 follows the very same pattern.

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7 Pk 5290, 118-1-3 to 4. The *Kāyatrayāvatāraśāstravṛtti*, a commentary on Nāgamitra's text, is also extant in the Tibetan canon (Pk 5291). It is ascribed to Jñānacandra, a Yogācāra disciple of Dharmapāla, ca. 530-561 CE. See Ruegg, *History of Madhyamaka Literature*, p. 56; and the appendix to Brian Brown's PhD dissertation which lists Jñānacandra among the lineage of Yogācāra masters according to Hsuan tsang.

Before proceeding further, let us entertain for a moment the principal alternative interpretation of *AA* vs. 1.17 that has been prominent in the Indo-Tibetan tradition, that of Haribhadra. According to Haribhadra's interpretation the terms: "*svābhāvikaḥ*," "*sasāmbhogo*," "*nairmāṇikaḥ*," and "*dharmakāyaḥ*" are understood to designate four Buddha *kāyas*. In Haribhadra's interpretation, "*dharmakāya*" of verse 1.17 is short for "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*" (a *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis, distinguished from the *svābhāvikakāya* which is its emptiness). And "*sakāritraḥ*" is semantically linked to [*jñānātmaka*] "*dharmakāya*."[8] The translation according to Haribhadra would be something like this:

> The Essence [Body], with the Enjoyment [Body], the Emanation [Body], and the Dharma Body with its activity as well; as four-fold are [they] proclaimed.

According to this (Haribhadra's) interpretation, the first three terms of the verse have to be interpreted as simple nouns; their adjectival morphologies are left unexplained and without any distinct adjectival function. If they fulfilled their adjectival morphology, the only noun they could modify would be "*kāyaḥ*" taken as semantically separate from "dharma" within the term "*dharmakāyaḥ*." But then we might expect the term "dharma" also to have an adjectival morphology in the verse, such as the *taddhita* "*dhārmika*," which it does not have. In any case, under this

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8 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 268-270; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 20-21, 914-916. Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 1.17 and chapter 8 will discussed in more detail in chapter 10 of this thesis. A brief summary of his interpretation of *AA* vs. 1.17 is given here for purposes of establishing the correct interpretation.

4 *kāya* mode of interpretation, the verb "*samudīritaḥ*" modifies all four *kāya* terms ("as four-fold are *they* proclaimed"). But then the verb should be plural, not singular. If the singular verb "*samudīritaḥ*" modifies one thing, and that is not the term "*dharmakāya*," then what could it modify? *AA* vs. 1.17 is the table of contents for the *AA's* 8th chapter, and whatever is "proclaimed" in that verse is precisely the subject of the *AA's* 8th chapter. Would the author have left the basic subject of the chapter unnamed? Would he end verse 1.17 with the statement: "it is proclaimed as four-fold" (where "it" is the entire subject of chapter 8) and then not even identify what "it" is?

We presented *AA* vss. 1.3-1.4 in chapter 6 above. In those verses, all eight basic subjects of the *AA's* eight substantive chapters are named. The eight subjects are the eight *abhisamayas* (fundamental realizations), presented in those verses as follows:

*prajñāpāramitāṣṭābhiḥ padārthaiḥ samudīritā/*
*sarvākārajñatā mārgajñatā sarvajñatā tataḥ//* *AA* 1.3
*sarvākārābhisambodho mūrdhaprāpto 'nupūrvikaḥ/*
*ekakṣaṇābhisambodho dharmakāyaś ca te'ṣṭadhā//* *AA* 1.4

The perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) is proclaimed through eight subjects, these eight being: total omniscience, knowledge of the paths, and then all-knowledge, the full realization of all aspects, the [realization] which has attained the summit, the gradual [realization], the realization in a single moment, and the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*).[9] *AA* 1.3-1.4

[9] Amano, 1975, p. 14.

The basic subject of the *AA's* 8th chapter is clearly identified and named here. It is "*dharmakāya*," the "Dharma Body." As the subject title of *AA* chapter 8, it is precisely what should be "proclaimed as four-fold" in verse 1.17, the table of contents for that chapter. Our tri-*kāya* interpretation of verse 1.17 accords with this finding, since in that verse we understand "*dharmakāya*" in its inclusive sense as the subject title of chapter 8, and the three *kāyas*, together with enlightened activity (*kāritra*) as the four aspects (or topics) of that subject.

Furthermore, *AA* verses 1.5 through 1.16 serve as the table of contents for the first seven chapters of the *AA*, just as vs. 1.17 is the table of contents for the 8th chapter. In vss. 1.5-1.16, the subject titles for every one of the seven chapters prior to chapter 8 are presented; and they are precisely the same as those given above in vss. 1.3-1.4.[10] According to our interpretation, vs. 1.17 follows suit by presenting the term "*dharmakāya*" as the title of chapter 8 (the very same term that appears as the title of chapter 8 in verse 1.4 above). According to Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation, vs. 1.17 is the only portion of the *AA's* table of

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10 Amano, 1975, pp. 14-16. *AA* vss. 1.5-1.16 list the topics for each of the eight substantive chapters, and then present the the title of the chapter at or near the end of each corresponding verse. *AA* vs. 1.6 names "*sarvākārajñatā*" as the title of chapter 1, vs. 1.9 names "*mārgajñatā*" as the title of chapter 2, vs. 1.11 names "*sarvajñatā*" as the title of chapter 3, vs. 1.13 names "*sarvākārābhisambodha*" as the title for chapter 4, vs. 1.15 names "*mūrdhābhisamaya*," "*anupūrvika[abhisamaya]*," and "*ekakṣaṇābhisambodha*" as the titles of chapters 5, 6, and 7 respectively. All these terms correspond to the names of chapters as given in *AA* vss. 1.3-1.4. Then, in vs. 1.17, the term "*dharmakāya*" appears which corresponds to the title for chapter 8 as given in vs. 1.4. According to our three *kāya* understanding of vs. 1.17, "*dharmakāya*" is in fact the title of chapter 8, referring to resultant *dharmakāya* (buddhahood as a whole) which comprises the three *kāyas* plus enlightened activity (*kāritra*). According to Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of vs. 1.17, the title of chapter 8 would be the only title missing in vss. 1.5-1.17, the entire table of contents for the *AA*.

contents which fails to give the subject title for its chapter. In his interpretation of verse 1.17, the fundamental meaning of the term "*dharmakāya*" is not the subject title of chapter 8, but just one out of the four *kāyas* he posits (the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*).

In vss. 1.5-1.15, topics comprising *AA* chapters 1 through 5 are listed in the precise order that they are discussed in their respective chapters of the *AA*. Vs. 1.16 mentions the number of topics in chapters 6 and 7 without giving their names. Then, vs. 1.17 again lists the topics comprising its chapter, the four topics of chapter 8.[11] If the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 1.17 is understood as the subject title of chapter 8, as in our interpretation, the four topics in the verse occur in precisely the same order that they appear in chapter 8 (first *svābhāvikakāya*, then *sāmbhogikakāya*, then *nairmāṇikakāya*, then *kāritra*). This would conform to the pattern found throughout the *AA's* table of contents (vss. 1.5-1.17). But if vs. 1.17's "*dharmakāya*" is interpreted as Haribhadra does (as one of the four topics of chapter 8, not its title), the order of topics in the verse no longer corresponds to their order within chapter 8. According to Haribhadra's analysis, the order of topics in vs. 1.17 is: *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*, *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*; but the order of their explanation in *AA* chapter 8 is: *svābhāvikakāya*, *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*. According to Haribhadra, then, vs. 1.17 is the only part

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[11] Amano, 1975, pp. 14-16.

of the table of contents which presents the topics of its corresponding chapter in the wrong order.

According to our three *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 1.17, then, the pattern of naming the chapter title, and, when listing chapter topics, presenting them in correct order, is strictly followed throughout vss. 1.5 through 1.17, the *AA's* entire table of contents. According to Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation, vs. 1.17 becomes an anomaly. It would be the only part of the *AA's* table of contents which leaves out its chapter title and which lists the chapter's topics in the wrong order.

*AA* vs. 9.2, the final verse of the entire *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, provides further important evidence to support our interpretation of vs. 1.17. Verse 9.2, as we mentioned in chapter 6, presents an abbreviated, final summation of the *AA's* eight subjects by summarizing them in three concepts: the object of yogic practice (i.e. the three knowledges (*jñatās*) which are the subjects of the *AA's* first three chapters), the yogic practice itself (the four realizations (*abhisamayas*) which are the subjects of the next four chapters), and the final result of the practice (the resultant *dharmakāya*, the subject of the 8th chapter).

*viṣayas tritayo hetuḥ prayogaś caturātmakaḥ/*
*dharmakāyaphalaṃ karmety anyas tredhārthasaṃgrahaḥ//* AA 9.2

The three-fold object, as cause, the four-fold practice,
the Dharma Body [with its] activity as result, thus in another way
is [the entire subject matter] summarized in three topics.[12]

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[12] Amano, 1975, p. 298.

This verse identifies the subject matter of *AA* chapter 8 as "*phalaṃ*," the result of the practice, expressed by two terms: "*dharmakāya karma*," where these terms clearly refer to the whole state of buddhahood (including all *kāyas*) together with its activity. *AA* vs. 1.17 contains virtually the same expression: "*dharmakāya sakāritraḥ*," "the *dharmakāya* with its activity." The simplest explanation is this: the phrase in vs. 9.2 and the phrase in vs. 1.17 were both intended to designate the content of *AA* chapter 8 as a whole, resultant *dharmakāya* (buddhahood, the three *kāyas*) together with its activity. This means the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 1.17 is used in its inclusive sense, referring to *dharmakāyaphalaṃ*, buddhahood as the total result of the path. And that means "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 1.17 indeed constitutes the title of *AA* chapter 8, with the terms: "*svābhāvikaḥ*," "*sasāmbhogo*," "*nairmāṇiko*," and "*sakāritraḥ*," in their proper order, designating the four aspects of resultant *dharmakāya* as the four topics which are explained in chapter 8.

In sum, the term "*dharmakāya*" is used with precisely the same inclusive sense in *AA* vss. 1.4, 1.17 and 9.2. It designates the subject matter and the title of *AA* chapter 8.[13] *AA* vs. 1.17's other four key terms ("*svābhāvikaḥ*," "*sasāmbhogo*," "*nairmāṇiko*," and "*sakāritraḥ*"), then, are in adjectival form for good reason. They modify the term "*dharmakāya*" as its four aspects. As such, they comprise the four topics of the "*dharmakāya*" chapter, *AA* chapter 8.

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13 Cf. gYag ston, *bLo gsal mgul rgyan*, fols. 1303b3-1304a1; Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge, *Yum don rab gsal*, fols. 309a2-b4.

We have done a grammatical analysis of *AA* vs. 1.17, analyzed it in relation to the structure of the *AA* as a whole, and pointed out important correlations to other texts of its period (texts of the Yogācāra tradition which developed the multiple *kāya* terminology the *AA* employs). The evidence is substantial: *AA* vs. 1.17 expiicates three (not four) *kāyas*. Since vs. 1.17 comprises the table of contents for *AA* chapter 8, we have already established that chapter 8 teaches three *kāyas* (as Ārya Vimuktisena thought), not four *kāyas* (as Haribhadra thought). As we analyze the key verses in chapter 8 below, we will present further evidence for this conclusion.

In fact, it is difficult to find any support for Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* vs. 1.17 within the Sanskrit text of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* itself. As we shall see in chapter 10, Haribhadra's innovative interpretation of four *kāyas* in the *AA* was probably motivated by considerations independent of the text, based upon which he then read his interpretation into the text.

3. Svābhāvikakāya: Analysis of AA Chapter 8, vss. 1 - 6

The 8th chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commences with a set of six verses which, like vs. 1.17, became a source of great controversy among Indo-Tibetan commentators of the succeeding centuries. The verses are as follows:

*sarvākārāṃ viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ/*
*svābhāviko muneḥ kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛti-lakṣaṇaḥ//* AA 8.1

The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects,
The Essence Body (*svābhāvikakāya*) of the Sage has their innate nature (*prakṛti*) as its characteristic.[14] AA 8.1

*bodhipakṣāpramāṇāni vimokṣā anupūrvaśaḥ/*
*navātmikā samāpattiḥ kṛtsnaṃ daśavidhātmakam//* AA 8.2
*abhibhvāyatanāny aṣṭa prakārāṇi prabhedataḥ/*
*araṇā praṇidhijñānam abhijñāḥ pratisamvidaḥ//* AA 8.3
*sarvākārāś catasro 'tha śuddhayo vaśitā daśa/*
*balāni daśa catvāri vaiśāradyāny arakṣaṇam//* AA 8.4
*trividhaṃ smṛtyupasthānaṃ tridhāsaṃmoṣa-dharmatā/*
*vasanāyāḥ samudghāto mahatī karuṇā jane//* AA 8.5
*āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭadaśeritāḥ/*
*sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate//* AA 8.6

"The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage which are proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated.[15] AA 8.2-8.6

The definition of *svābhāvikakāya* is presented in verse 8.1. It is defined as the innate or original nature (*prakṛti*) of the undefiled Buddha dharmas. The list of those undefiled dharmas is then presented in verses

[14] Amano, 1975, p. 262.
[15] Amano, 1975, p. 264.

8.2-8.6. Importantly, at the very end of vs. 8.6 appears the expression: "*iti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate,*" "thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated" (other possible translations are: "thus is the *dharmakāya* named," "thus is the *dharmakāya* indicated," "thus is the *dharmakāya* described," etc.).

Since *AA* chapter 8 draws on two textual traditions, the *PP* and the Yogācāra, we summarized their buddhological patterns in the first section of this chapter. There we noted that the *PP sūtras* make frequent reference to buddhahood through their listing of the undefiled Buddha dharmas. We also noted, however, that the *PP sūtras* never identify the *dharmakāya* simply *as being* the set of undefiled dharmas. Rather, they characterize the *dharmakāya* as the emptiness of all dharmas (including the Buddha dharmas) and the perfected realization of that emptiness. In the *PP sūtras*, then, the set of undefiled dharmas represents a phenomenal description of *dharmakāya* (from a conventional point-of-view), not the *dharmakāya* per se (which is an ultimate realization of emptiness). The list of undefiled dharmas, after all, is a conceptually discriminated set of terms, while the *dharmakāya* is a realization beyond conceptual discrimination.

When *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 are read in the light of this understanding from the *PP sūtras*, the meaning appears clear. After presenting the set of undefiled dharmas as they are listed in the *PP sūtra* (passage VIII 5), the *AA* says (translated quite literally): "thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated." It does not say that the *dharmakāya is* the collection of undefiled dharmas. It says that the *dharmakāya* is conventionally

*denominated* in terms of those dharmas. This is a subtle but important distinction which reflects clearly the pattern of thought of the *PP sūtras*.

What about *AA* vs. 8.1? The term "*svābhāvikakāya*" does not appear in the *PP sūtras*. Obviously, the author of the *AA* drew the term from the Yogācāra tradition contemporaneous to him. But *AA* vs. 8.1 introduces the concept of *svābhāvikakāya* by defining it in terms of the undefiled Buddha dharmas, as their innate nature (*prakṛti*). Nowhere in the Yogācāra tradition is the primary definition or description of *svābhāvikakāya* made in that way. For the Yogācāras, as noted in chapter 4 above, *svābhāvikakāya* was considered the essence of buddhahood ("*svabhāva*," Buddha's "essence" in their 6-fold buddhological scheme). And Yogācāra scholars explicitly specified that the list of undefiled dharmas was not to be taken as defining of buddhahood, because that list was merely a phenomenal description of buddhahood (see chapter 4, sections 2 and 3).

Light is shed on this problem by bearing in mind the unique commentarial purpose of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. Its task was not to comment independently on the Mahāyāna paths, or buddhahood their result, based on a wide array of available Mahāyāna *sūtras* (as the *MSA*, *Msg*, etc. had done). The *AA's* explicit purpose was to comment upon the paths and their result as they were expressed specifically in the Large *PP sūtra*. Therefore, the *AA's* author had to use th .'*P* textual material he had before him. As we have noted, the material on buddhahood he had was the list of Buddha dharmas, marks and signs, and bodhisattva activities which appears in Large *PP sūtra* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5. In

addition, also as noted above, the *AA's* author in his 8th chapter wanted to draw correspondences between the Yogācāra and *PP* expressions of buddhahood. Therefore he sought to map the Yogācāra theory of buddhahood onto the expressions of buddhahood he found in *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5.

With reference to *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6, then, the *AA's* author had to specify the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya* in terms of what he found in *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5. And within those passages, all that could reasonably correspond to *svābhāvikakāya* was the list of undefiled Buddha dharmas presented in *PP* passage VIII 5. In that passage, the undefiled dharmas are listed amongst many other mundane and supramundane qualities imparted by bodhisattvas to sentient beings (see chapter 7 above, sections 2.B.6 and 3).[16] In sum, the *AA's* author was required by the constraints of his textual basis (*PP* passage VIII 5) to define *svābhāvikakāya*, for the first time in Mahāyāna literature, first and foremost in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas.

Given the unique project of the *AA's* author, to map Yogācāra onto *PP* patterns of buddhological thought, it was not unreasonable to take that list of dharmas as a textual basis for *svābhāvikakāya*. The collection of undefiled dharmas comprised a phenomenal description of the *PP sūtras' dharmakāya* (even though they were never to be directly identified with

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[16] See Conze, *Large Sutra*, Motilal Edition, pp. 580-583, 654-656 for Conze's translations of the section of passage VIII 5 in the 18,000 and 25,000 *PP sūtras* which presents the list of *buddha dharmas* upon which the list in *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 is based. Such lists of undefiled *buddha dharmas* are commonly found throughout the Large *PP sūtra* (see chapter 7, section II.B.5. of this thesis)

it, the *dharmakāya* being beyond such conceptual differentiation; see chapter 3 above). If the *AA's* author identified the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya* with the *PP dharmakāya*, the list of undefiled dharmas in passage VIII 5 could be read equally as a phenomenal description of the *svābhāvikakāya*. It is likely, then, that in *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6, he was drawing a correspondence between the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya* and the *PP dharmakāya*, denominated conventionally in terms of the undefiled dharmas as listed in *PP* passage VIII 5.

In other words, the *AA's* author took the list of undefiled dharmas in *PP* passage VIII 5 as a phenomenal expression of the *PP's dharmakāya*, equating that with the *svābhāvikakāya* of Yogācāra. Since the only thing that could be taken as an expression of the *PP dharmakāya* in passage VIII 5 was its phenomenal description in terms of the undefiled dharmas, his definition of *svābhāvikakāya* had to be made in terms of those dharmas. In *AA* vs. 8.1, then, he defines *svābhāvikakāya* (equated with *dharmakāya* in vs. 8.6) in terms of the undefiled dharmas. But in line with the *PP* understanding of *dharmakāya*, he does not define *svābhāvikakāya* itself (=*PP dharmakāya*) as *being* the set of dharmas. He defines it as "the innate nature" (*prakṛti*) of those dharmas, the pure essence which is conventionally denominated *in terms* of those dharmas.[17]

[17] There is an intriguing passage in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, *Msg* 10.3, which contains a phrase quite close in expression to *AA* 8.1 (Lamotte, p. 84 Tib., p. 269 French). This section of the *Msg* discusses five special characteristics (*lakṣaṇas*) of the *dharmakāya*. The second characteristic of the *dharmakāya* (*Msg* 10.3.2) is called: "*dkar po'i chos kyi rang bzhin gyi mtshan nyid*," which could be translated: "the characteristic of being the nature of the virtuous *dharmas*." The Tibetan term "*rang bzhin*" could have been a

This indicates how *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 are most reasonably interpreted with reference to our findings on the *PP* textual tradition (cf. chapters 3 and 7 above). What about the Yogācāra tradition? The genius of the *AA's* author is that, with the exception of the prominent role he gave to the list of undefiled dharmas in vss. 8.1-8.6 (necessitated by his *PP sūtra* text basis), the same verses fully accord with Yogācāra patterns of expressing buddhahood.

As we noted in chapter 4, sections 4 and 5, the Yogācāra texts which formulated the theory of *svābhāvikakāya* introduced the concept by identifying it with "*dharmakāya,*" understood in its exclusive sense as the very essence of buddhahood, the non-dual realization of suchness (*MSA* 9.60, *Msg* 10.1.1 and their commentaries, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*).[18] Yogācāra texts, probably basing themselves on the *PP sūtras*, explicitly state that the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* can not be "defined" in terms

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translation of either the Sanskrit term "*svabhāva*" (as Lamotte gives on p. 269), or, equally possible, the Sanskrit term "*prakṛti.*" If the original was "*prakṛti*", the expression in *Msg* 10.3.2 could be reconstructed as: "*śukladharma prakṛti-lakṣaṇa,*" which is semantically very close to the expression in *AA* vs. 8.1 defining *svābhāvikakāya* as: "*dharmāḥ nirāsravāḥ ... teṣāṃ prakṛti-lakṣanaḥ.*" This expression in *Msg* 10.3.2 is not the primary definition of the *svābhāvikakāya* in that text, but as part of a discussion on various characteristics of *dharmakāya*, it indicates how the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is to be related to the undefiled *dharmas* phenomenally ascribed to buddhahood. It seems quite possible that the author of the *AA* modelled his vs. 8.1 on *Msg* 10.3.2. Or, equally possible, the author of the *Msg* modelled his expression on *AA* vs. 8.1. In any case, the *AA* author's project of relating *svābhāvikakāya* to the list of undefiled *dharmas* mentioned in *PP* passage VIII 5 required him to make those *dharmas* part of the primary definition of *svābhāvikakāya* for the first time in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

18 *MSA* 9.60 *bhāṣya*, Levi, p. 45; *Msg*, 10.1.1, Lamotte, pp. 83 (Tib.), 266 (French); *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio edition, p. 125. See chapter 4 section 5 on inclusive and exclusive senses of "*dharmakāya.*" The inclusive sense refers to buddhahood as a whole, all three *kāyas*, etc. The exclusive sense refers to just the first of the three *kāyas*, referred to in Yogācāra texts alternatively as *svābhāvikakāya* or *dharmakāya*.

of the collection of undefiled dharmas, since it has passed beyond such conceptual designations. Nevertheless, the Yogācāra tradition retained the list of undefiled dharmas as a phenomenal description of the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* (see chapter 4, sections 2 and 3). Looked at, then, in the light of these well established Yogācāra patterns, *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 read as follows: the "*svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1 is identified as "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6, where "*dharmakāya*" is taken in its exclusive sense as the very essence of buddhahood, the first of the three *kāyas*, experienced only by Buddha (distinguished epistemologically from the other two *kāyas* which manifest foı others; see chapter 4, section 5 and chapter 5, section 2 above). That *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, the subject of all six verses 8.1-8.6, is denominated from a phenomenal point-of-view in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas (though in reality, of course, it has passed beyond all such conceptual differentiation).

We noted in section 2 of this chapter that the term "*dharmakāya*" is used with its inclusive sense in *AA* vss. 1.4, 1.17, and 9.2 to designate the whole subject matter of *AA* chapter 8, buddhahood as a whole. But it appears that *AA* vs. 8.6, on the other hand, uses the term "*dharmakāya*" in its exclusive sense to refer to the first of the three *kāyas* alone, the *svābhāvikakāya*. Both usages, of course, fully conform to established Yogācāra patterns contemporaneous to the composition of the *AA*.

If, then, we take seriously both of the textual traditions out of which the *AA's* author composed his verses, *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 read straightforwardly as follows: The *svābhāvikakāya* (of Yogācāra), is the very essence, the innate nature of buddhahood as described (in *PP* passage

VIII 5) in terms of the undefiled dharmas. The *svābhāvikakāya* is the *dharmakāya* (of the *PP sūtra*, and in its exclusive sense, of the Yogācāra tradition), conventionally distinguished and denominated (in *PP* passage VIII 5) in terms of those undefiled dharmas. A straighforward reading of the Sanskrit verses (as we presented them above) supports this interpretation, which also fully accords with the patterns of thought in the *PP* and Yogācāra textual traditions discussed above.

As noted in chapter 6 above, the controversy on the number of *kāyas* taught in *AA* chapter 8 centered especially on vss. 8.1-8.6. Ārya Vimuktisena understood them to teach one *kāya*, referred to first in vs. 8.1 as "*svābhāvikakāya*" and then in vs. 8.6 as "*dharmakāya*." Our interpretation fully accords with Ārya Vimuktisena's. Haribhadra thought vss. 8.1-8.6 taught two distinct *kāyas*, the *svābhāvikakāya* in vs. 8.1 and a *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya* in vs. 8.6.

We just demonstrated in section 2 of this chapter that *AA* vs. 1.17, the table of contents for *AA* chapter 8, explicates three *kāyas*, not four. Our interpretation of vss. 8.1-8.6 further confirms that finding, by showing that vss. 8.1-8.6 teach one *kāya* (as Ārya Vimuktisena thought), not two *kāyas* (as Haribhadra thought). This is because all commentators agreed that *AA* vss. 8.12 and 8.33 taught *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively. This makes the total number of *kāyas* in *AA* chapter 8 either three or four, depending on whether one's interpretation of vss. 8.1-8.6 has them teaching one *kāya* (Ārya Vimuktisena's and our own view) or two *kāyas* (Haribhadra's view; see chapter 6 of this thesis).

Haribhadra's analysis will be discussed at length in chapter10 below. Here we refer to it briefly for comparison. Haribhadra said that vs. 8.1 defines the *svābhāvikakāya* as the ultimate nature, the *dharmatā*, i.e. the emptiness, of the undefiled dharmas. He understood the term "*dharmakāya*" in *AA* vs. 8.6, then, to designate a second *kāya*, the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*, the set of undefiled dharmas taken in itself as the conventionally existent basis of the emptiness which is the *svābhāvikakāya*. For him, then, *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 listed the undefiled dharmas, and the last part of vs. 8.6 then identified them directly as a second Buddha *kāya*, the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*, Buddha's conventionally existent collection of gnoses.[19] He therefore concluded that vss. 8.1-8.6 taught two different *kāyas*,.

Although Haribhadra's theory may comprise an excellent independent analysis of buddhahood (owing much to Madhyamaka analysis of ultimate and conventional truth, and to developments in Buddhist logic in the centuries following the *AA*), there are many reasons for questioning its accuracy as an interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. If Haribhadra were correct, *AA* vs. 8.6 would have to be understood to directly identify the set of undefiled dharmas with the *dharmakāya* (for Haribhadra, "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 is an abbreviation for "*[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*," a term which appears neither in the *PP sūtras* nor in the Yogācāra tradition). In Haribhadra's interpretation, the verses should say that the undefiled dharmas *are* the *dharmakāya* (not just that they

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19 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 270; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 914-916.

denominate or designate it, but that they *are* it). Let us look again at vss. 8.2-8.6:

*bodhipakṣāpramāṇāni vimokṣā anupūrvaśaḥ/*
*navātmikā samāpattiḥ kṛtsnaṃ daśavidhātmakam//* AA 8.2
*abhibhvāyatanāny aṣṭa prakārāṇi prabhedataḥ/*
*araṇā praṇidhijñānaṃ abhijñāḥ pratisaṃvidaḥ//* AA 8.3
*sarvākārāś catasro 'tha śuddhayo vaśitā daśa/*
*balāni daśa catvāri vaiśāradyāny arakṣaṇam//* AA 8.4
*trividhaṃ smṛtyupasthānaṃ tridhāsaṃmoṣa-dharmatā/*
*vasanāyāḥ samudghāto mahatī karuṇā jane//* AA 8.5
*āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭādaśeritāḥ/*
*sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate//* AA 8.6

"The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage which are proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated.[20] *AA* 8.2-8.6

These verses present a list of undefiled dharmas which appears in *PP* passage VIII 5. At the end of the list, the last half of vs. 8.6 marks off the entire list of dharma terms with the term "*iti*" ("*ceti*" = "*ca*" plus "*iti*" with external *saṃdhi*). The Sanskrit term "*iti*" here, following its common usage, marks off the set of terms which precede it as a set. "*Iti*"

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20 Amano, 1975, p. 264.

also functions like quotation marks surrounding that set of terms. It indicates that the words which precede it are the words spoken, thought or expressed by someone verbally or in some text.[21] Since the list of undefiled dharma terms in the verses is drawn from *PP sūtra* passage VIII 5, "*iti*" does serve this very function in vs. 8.6. In other words, the list of undefiled dharmas in vss. 8.2-8.6 is set off by "*iti*" as a quotation from the *PP sūtra* of a set of terms which designate something. The word "*abhidhīyate*," which is a present, passive, singular form of the verb "*abhidhā*," can be translated: "is named," "is called," "is denominated," etc.[22] Since the entire list of undefiled dharmas is marked off as a set of names designating something, leaving only the singular term, "*dharmakāya*" as the thing designated, "*dharmakāya*" serves as the object of the verb "*abhidhīyate*," giving: "the *dharmakāya* is denominated," or "the *dharmakāya* is called." According to the syntax of vs. 8.6, then, it is the *dharmakāya* which is designated by the set of terms for the undefiled dharmas. The most direct translation of vss. 8.2-8.6, therefore, is as above: "'The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, ... the great compassion for living beings, the eighteen qualities unique to the Sage, and total omniscience': thus is the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*) denominated."

*AA* vs. 8.6, therefore, does not say that the *dharmakāya is* the collection of undefiled dharmas. It says that the *dharmakāya* is *denominated* ("*abhidhīyate*") as those dharmas. This is a subtle but

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21 Monier-Williams, p. 165, col. 1.
22 Monier-Williams, p. 63, col. 2.

crucially important distinction, because if the Sanskrit is read straightforwardly and literally, it does not agree with Haribhadra's interpretation but with ours. *AA* vs. 8.6 does not say that the collection of undefiled dharmas *is dharmakāya* (which could be taken, as Haribhadra does, to imply a second *kāya* of conventionally existent entities distinct from vs. 8.1's *svābhāvikakāya*, the emptiness of those entities). Nor does vs. 8.6 say that the collection of undefiled dharmas itself is called "*dharmakāya*."[23] Rather vs. 8.6 literally says that the *dharmakāya* is "denominated" (*abhidhīyate*) in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas. It does not simply equate the collection of undefiled dharmas with *dharmakāya* (as some sort of separate [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* as Haribhadra would have us believe), rather, it says the list of dharmas (conventionally) *designates* the *dharmakāya*. This literal reading supports our interpretation over Haribhadra's. It fully accords with the patterns of thought in the *PP* and Yogācāra textual traditions upon which the *AA* was

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23 If vss. 8.2-8.6 were intended to say: "The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, ... the great compassion for living beings, the eighteen qualities unique to the Sage, and total omniscience are called 'the Dharma Body'," the term "*iti*" should follow the term "*dharmakāya*," not precede it (the term *iti* serves as a quotation marking for the term or terms *preceding* it, not following it). And the verb "*abhidhīyate*" should probably also be in the plural ("*abhidhīyante*") to agree with a the plurality of undefiled *dharma* terms, not singular (agreeing with the singular term "*dharmakāya*"). The Tibetan translation of the verses in Tibetan editions of the *AA* seems to have misplaced the term "*iti*" ("*zhes*") by having it follow (rather than precede) the term "*dharmakāya*" ("*chos sku*"), which differs from all available Sanskrit manuscripts of the *AA* (as the *AA* occurs in the *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā*, see Wogihara, Amano, 1975, and Amano, 1983; the *AA* was translated into Tibetan as a separate text in the 11th century by Ngog blo ldan she rab and Go mi 'chi med, Pk 5184). This caused problems for later Tibetan commentators following Haribhadra, who mistakenly thought vs. 8.6 said: "... the eighteen qualities unique to a Sage, and total omniscience are called '*dharmakāya*,'" and who therefore mistakenly believed Haribhadra had given the most direct interpretation of the verse (when in fact Ārya Vimuktisena had). This will be discussed below in section 6 of this chapter.

based (according to which the undefiled dharmas are never equated with *dharmakāya* but just taken as its phenomenal expression). And it is further supported by our demonstration that *AA* vs. 1.17 teaches three (and not four) *kāyas* (which requires that vss. 8.1-8.6 teach just one *kāya*, i.e. that *svābhāvikakāya* of vs. 8.1 = *dharmakāya* of vs. 8.6).

If Haribhadra had made his interpretations of vs. 1.17 and vss. 8.1-8.6 solely based upon the Sanskrit in the verses themselves, we would be astonished that a scholar of such prodigious reputation should have such poor philological abilities. He so stretches the meaning of the Sanskrit expressions away from their most direct sense that it might appear as if he had simply assumed, as a sort of philological principle, that a text never directly says what it means. If the *AA* is read as carefully and literally as possible, Haribhadra's great reputation notwithstanding, what it says is abundantly clear, and fully conforms to the two textual traditions upon which it was based: it teaches the three *kāyas* of Yogācāra as they are mapped onto the Large *PP sūtra*. Yet Haribhadra did not gain the great reputation he has for nothing. He is universally acknowledged to be the greatest *PP* commentator, and his commentaries are among our richest sources of Mahāyāna philosophy and praxis. His interpretation of *AA* chapter 8 was based on important concerns which are independent of the text itself, logical and *Madhyamakan* concerns which we will examine in chapter10 below. He then read his innovative four *kāya* interpretation into the text based on those concerns. Sanskrit is a flexible enough language to permit eccentric interpretations. This is expecially so with versified Sanskrit like that of the *AA*, about which it can always be

claimed that versification precluded the author's saying what he really meant. As we shall see in chapter 10 below, Haribhadra does fall back upon this claim to support his interpretations.

We have dated the *AA* to sometime from the 4th to the early 6th century. Ārya Vimuktisena is dated to the early 6th century, and Haribhadra from the late 8th to early 9th century. As we have seen, *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 comprise a unique expression of buddhological concepts for its period, a new way to associate the concepts of *svābhāvikakāya*, *dharmakāya* and undefiled dharmas which was necessitated by the *AA's* special project of mapping Yogācāra categories onto *PP* passages. It would appear that closer to the time of the *AA's* composition it was much more clearly seen as the Yogācāra-*PP* mapping that it was, hence Ārya Vimuktisena's precise and easy flowing interpretation of it as such (to be discussed in chapter 9 below). Centuries after the period of the *AA's* composition, however, with Buddhist logic and *Madhyamaka* concerns having developed extensively in the intervening period, the *AA* was seen through a different lense, resulting in a new interpretation by Haribhadra.

4. Sāmbhogikakāya: Analysis of AA Chapter 8, vss. 12-32

We interpreted *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 in their entirety as teaching the *svābhāvikakāya* (=*dharmakāya* in the exclusive sense), and therefore would also interpret vss. 8.7-8.11 as a continuation of that discussion on various qualities of the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* by reference to its

gnosis, permanence, pervasive activity, etc. (I refer the reader back to chapter 5 above for a discussion of these aspects of the *svābhāvikakāya*, and to chapter 6 for their expression in *AA* vss. 8.7-8.11). In keeping with the the *AA* author's project of mapping Yogācāra concepts and expressions to those of the *PP*, it is worth noting that vss. 8.7-8.11 have interesting parallels to verses of Yogācāra texts. *AA* vs. 8.7 on Buddha's *araṇāsamādhi* (meditative concentration freeing from passions) is very close to *Msg* 10.12 and *MSA* 21.45. *AA* vs. 8.8 on a Buddha's *pranidhijñāna* (gnosis resulting from resolve) is almost identical to *Msg* 10.13 and *MSA* 21.46. *AA* vss. 8.9-8.10, which explain why buddhahood does not manifest for anyone who has not created the karmic conditions, have parallels to *MSA* vss. 9.16 and 9.34, as well as to a number of passages in the fourth chapter of the *RGV*. *AA* vs. 8.11 on the pervasiveness and permanence of buddhahood has parallels to *MSA* 9.15, 9.17, 9.20, 9.66 with *bhāṣya* and to *Msg* 10.3.4. Further parallels between *AA* vs. 8.11 and Yogācāra texts emerge in light of our discussion in chapter 5, section 5 on the "permanence" or "eternality" of *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*. All of this further corroborates our understanding of the central project of *AA* chapter 8: to draw from the Yogācāra textual tradition in its explication of the *PP* text basis. *AA* vss. 8.7-8.11, then, are based in large part on previously established Yogācāra characterizations of the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*. We continue now, then, with our analysis of *AA* chapter 8 at the point in the chapter where its second *kāya* is taught.

*AA* vs. 8.12 is the point in chapter 8 where it introduces and defines the second of its three *kāyas*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*. *AA* vs. 8.12 is as follows:

> *dvātriṃśallakṣaṇāśītivyañjanātmā muner ayam/*
> *sāmbhogiko mataḥ kāyo mahāyānopabhogataḥ//* *AA* 8.12
>
> This, having the character of the thirty-two marks and eighty signs, is considered [to be] the Body of the Sage in its Shared Enjoyment (*sāmbhogikakāya*), because of its enjoyment of the great vehicle (*mahāyāna*).[24] *AA* 8.12

This verse provides strong corroboration for our understanding of *AA* Chapter 8 primarily as a mapping of the three Yogācāra *kāyas* onto the textual material of the Large *PP sūtra*. The reasoning is as follows.

Neither the term "*sāmbhogikakāya*" (nor the term "*nairmāṇikakāya*") are found in the *PP sūtras*. The *PP sūtras* employ the much more general term "*rūpakāya*" ("form body"), which refers to a Buddha's physical manifestion in general (see chapter 3 above). The *PP sūtras* open with the familiar *sūtra* formula: "thus have I heard at one time," and then identify an actual location in India where the *sūtra* was understood to have been expounded, e.g. Rājagṛha or Śrāvastī. Because the *PP sūtras* declare themselves in historical time as taught by [Śākyamuni] Buddha in Indian geography, the Buddha's occasional mentions of his "*rūpakāya*" seem to refer, for the most part, simply his physical form as the teacher of the *sūtra*. However, some *PP* passages also describe the Buddha

24 Amano, 1975, p. 276.

emanating many miraculous forms, including innumerable emanations of his own body, into various realms of beings, and such limitless emanations, as form, were also presumably included in the semantic range of the term "*rūpakāya*."

"*Sāmbhogikakāya*" is a term first employed by Yogācāra texts to designate exalted central Buddha figures of early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, while "*nairmāṇikakāya*" was first specified in Yogācāra texts to refer to their limitless emanations into the worlds of beings to teach and assist them (see chapters 4 and 5 above).

Interestingly, throughout the entire Yogācāra and Yogācāra related literature discussed in chapters 4 and 5 above (the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, etc.), the 32 marks and 80 signs were never specifically assigned to either the *sāmbhogikakāya* or the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Rather, they were always ascribed to the *rūpakāya* in general. Even though these Yogācāra texts (3rd to 6th century CE) explicate the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* at length, clearly distinguishing between them, they do not distinguish between them in the ascription of the 32 marks and 80 signs. That is because these texts mention the marks and signs only in the context of listing and describing the dharmas of a Buddha, without anywhere ascribing them to one type of form body over another. In this they are much like the *PP sūtras* which had never formally distinguished *sāmbhogikakāya* from *nairmāṇikakāya* and therefore could only ascribe the marks and signs to *rūpakāya* in general.

The marks and signs are mentioned in *MSA* vs. 21-49 *bhāṣya*, where they merely form a part of the general list of undefiled Buddha dharmas

discussed in *MSA* chapter 21 (Levi, p. 185). No distinction is made between *sāmbhogikakāya* or *nairmāṇikakāya* as to their possessor. The *Msg* follows the *MSA's* account of the marks and signs, also not ascribing them to one type of *rūpakāya* over the other (Lamotte, pp. 88-89, 295). The third chapter of the *RGV* describes the marks among a broader discussion of the Buddha's qualities (*guṇāḥ*). There it ascribes the marks simply to the "*saṃvṛti kāya*" (conventional *kāya* = *parārtha kāya*, the *kāya* for others' benefit) as opposed to the "*paramārtha kāya*" (ultimate *kāya* = *svārtha kāya*, the *kāya* for one's own benefit, Johnson, p.91). In the *RGV*, "*saṃvṛti kāya*" designates the *rūpakāya* in general. It does not distinguish between the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* (which were explicated separately in *RGV* chapter 2, Johnson, pp. 79-90). In ascribing the 32 marks to the "*saṃvṛti kāya*," the *RGV* follows the *MSA* and *Msg* in ascribing them to *rūpakāya* without distinction.

In short, as far as we can determine, prior to the composition of the *AA*, nowhere either in the *PP sūtras* or in the Yogācāra textual tradition are the 32 marks and 80 signs specifically ascribed to either *sāmbhogikakāya* or *nairmāṇikakāya*. They either comprised part of a longer list of Buddha qualities without ascription to any particular *kāya*, or they were ascribed only to *rūpakāya* without distinguishing type. And as we have seen (chapters 4, 5 above) nowhere in Yogācāra literature do the marks and signs enter into the definitions or formulative explanations of those two *kāyas*.

In the *AA's* 8th chapter, then, for the first time to my knowledge in Indian Mahāyāna literature, the marks and signs are ascribed specifically

to the *sāmbhogikakāya*. And equally surprising, in the *AA's* 8th chapter, for the first time in Indian Mahāyāna literature, the marks and signs form part of the primary definition of *sāmbhogikakāya*.[25] Why did the *AA's* author choose to specify the *sāmbhogikakāya* in that innovative way? Again, the explanation is simple if the *AA* is understood as a mapping of the three Yogācāra *kāyas* onto the Large *PP sūtra*.

In *PP* passage VIII 5 (upon which the *AA's* 8th chapter is based), included with the list of undefiled Buddha dharmas, appears the list of 32 marks and 80 signs which are generally ascribed in the *PP sūtra* to the physical form of its central figure.[26] The *AA's* author finds in that list of marks and signs the only *PP* textual material available to him to correlate with the Yogācāra concept of *sāmbhogikakāya*. Since the 32 marks and 80 signs are extolled in the *sūtra* as especially exalted qualities of the physical form of the Bhagavat (ŚĀkyamuni Buddha), they comprise the only reasonable basis in *PP* passage VIII 5 upon which to attach the Yogācāra label "*sāmbhogikakāya*," which was meant to designate exalted Buddha figures who taught Mahāyāna *sūtras*. The constraints of his *PP*

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[25] Nagao, "On the Theory of Buddha-Body," p. 34 and note 13, notes that the 32 marks of a *mahāpuruṣa* were ascribed to Śākyamuni ("Gautama") Buddha in early Buddhism, but, he says, "the *trikāya* theories of later ages tell about these marks of the Buddha only in relation to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, and do not recognize them in the *nairmāṇika-kāya*." In fact, it is the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* which first ascribes those marks primarily to the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and later literature which does so is probably based on it. I have been unable to find any ascription of the marks specifically to the *sāmbhogikakāya* in any Mahāyāna literature prior to the *AA* (including all texts discussed in chapters 4 and 5 above). The most interesting part, however, is the reason why the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* first did so. Read on.

[26] Conze, *Large Sutra*, Motilal Edition, pp. 583-587, 657-665. The equivalent list of 32 marks and 80 signs is presented in passage VIII 5 of all editions of the Large *PP sūtra* in Sanskrit and Tibetan available to me.

text basis, combined with his overall project of mapping Yogācāra *kāyas* onto *PP* expressions, required the *AA's* author to specify the *sāmbhogikakāya* (of Yogācāra) as the possessor of the marks and signs (taught in *PP* passage VIII 5) for the first time in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. His innovation, then, was necessitated by his overall project and the textual materials he was using.

*AA* vs. 8.12 reads as follows:

> "This, having the character of the thirty-two marks and eighty signs, is considered [to be] the Body of the Sage (*sāmbhogikakāya*) in its Shared Enjoyment, because of its enjoyment of the great vehicle." *AA* vs. 8.12

In light of the analysis above, the verse clearly draws from two sources descriptive of a Buddha as an exalted teacher, and then applies both in defining the *sāmbhogikakāya*. The first tradition is the *PP*, whose passage VIII 5 lists the thirty-two marks and eighty signs which are referred to in this verse and then discussed in *AA* vss. 8.13-8.32. The second source is the Yogācāra textual tradition, which defines *sāmbhogikakāya* in terms of its shared enjoyment of the dharma of the Mahāyāna (*MSA* vs. 9.60 *bhāṣya*; *Msg* 10.1.2; etc.).

As we noted in chapter 5, section 5 above, *MSA* vs. 9.61 and its commentaries explicitly characterize different *sāmbhogikakāyas* as differing in regard to their retinues, pure realms, names, forms, *sūtra* teachings, and activities. Sthiramati (ca. 510-570 CE), commenting on the different teachings given by different *sāmbhogikakāyas*, identifies the

*Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, along with the *Daśabhūmika sūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, as examples of different *sūtras* taught by different *sāmbhogikakāyas*.[27] This indicates that by the 6th century CE, Yogācāras had identified the central figure of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* as the *sāmbhogikakāya* of their three *kāya* scheme (It is logical to assume that they also identified the limitless forms emanated by that central figure in those *sūtras* as the Yogācāra *nairmāṇikakāya*).

We have dated the *AA* from sometime in the 4th century to the early 6th century at the latest. Sthiramati's identification of the central figure of the *PP sūtra* as a *sāmbhogikakāya* may have owed something to the pattern first established by the *AA*. The marks and signs mentioned in the *PP sūtras* are generally ascribable to the form of the Bhagavat, the central figure and expounder of those *sūtras*. *AA* vs. 8.12 identifies the *sāmbhogikakāya* as the possessor of the marks and signs in the *PP*. It would be reasonable, then, based on a reading of *AA* vs. 8.12, to identify the *PP sūtra's* central figure with the Yogācāra *sāmbhogikakāya*. And this may be what inspired Sthiramati's inclusion of the *PP sūtra* among the teachings of different *sāmbhogikakāyas*. It is also possible, though, that *AA* vs. 8.12 and Sthiramati's comment are independent developments. In any case, *AA* vs. 8.12 is the first Indian Mahāyāna specification of the marks and signs to the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the first time *sāmbhogikakāya* is defined in terms of them.

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27 *Vṛttibhāṣya*, sDe dge mi, fol. 136b4-136b5.

Having drawn the correspondence in *AA* vs. 8.12 between *sāmbhogikakāya* (of Yogācāra) and the marks and signs (listed in *PP* passage VIII 5), the *AA's* author then details those marks and signs individually, together with some of their causes, in *AA* vss. 8.13-8.32. He does so precisely in accordance with their presentation in *PP* passage VIII 5 (see chapter 6 above for a summary of *AA* vss. 8.13-8.32). As a set, then, *AA* vss. 8.12 through 8.32 provide very strong corroboration for our theory that the *AA* constitutes a mapping of Yogācāra categories onto the Large *PP sūtra*. And this, in turn, provides further corroboration for our interpretation of the *AA* as a three *kāya* text in general.

5. Nairmāṇikakāya and its Activity: Analysis of AA chapter 8, vss 33-40

The *AA's* author established a pattern above. First he presented one verse to make the basic correspondence between a Yogācāra *kāya* and the appropriate textual material from the Large *PP* passage (vs. 8.1 for *svābhāvikakāya*, vs. 8.12 for *sāmbhogikakāya*). Then, in a number of subsequent verses, he detailed the content of the *PP* passage (vss. 8.2-8.6 detailing the undefiled *dharmas*, vss. 8.13-8.32 detailing the marks and signs). The same pattern is followed in his presentation of the *nairmāṇikakāya*. In verse 8.33, the *AA's* author draws a correspondence between the Yogācāra *nairmāṇikakāya* and the extensive textual material in *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 which explicate many sorts of activities

done by bodhisattvas for benefitting beings. *AA* vss. 8.34-8.40 then detail those activities as they are presented in the *PP*.

*PP* passage VIII 4 discusses in general how bodhisattvas use skill in methods (*upāyakauśalya*) to lead living beings out of their suffering to enlightenment. Then, in passage VIII 5, the Buddha tells in detail the activities of bodhisattvas. He does so by describing what he sees as he surveys the universe: limitless numbers of bodhisattvas manifesting themselves in all realms of beings. By means of their supernatural abilities, the bodhisattvas lead beings step by step out of lower realms into higher realms, and then onto each stage of the Buddhist paths to *nirvāṇa* and *bodhi*.[28] Besides working to assist hell beings, ravenous ghost-like beings (*pretas*), and animals, the bodhisattvas also enter into the realm of humans to assist them. They do so primarily through four means of gathering and teaching disciples (*catvāri saṃgrahavastūni*, giving, kind words, acting for their benefit, and consistency of action). The most extensively explained of the four ways is the bodhisattvas' giving of things to humans (*dāna*). They give material gifts to satisfy and attract disciples They impart meditative instruction of a mundane kind (*laukikadharmāḥ*), and they impart meditative and spiritual qualities of a supramundane kind (*lokkotaradharmāḥ*). Included among the supramundane qualities is the collection of undefiled Buddha dharmas and

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28 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, sections VIII 4 and VIII 5. *Large Sutra*, pp. 573-576 for passage VIII 4; pp. 576-652 for passage VIII 5. Although not identical in every term or, where there are lists of *dharma* terms, in the precise order of the terms, substantially equivalent passages for VIII 4 and VIII 5 occur in all editions of the Large *PP sūtra* available to me in Sanskrit and Tibetan (see chapter 7, section II.B.4 above). The same can be said of all sections of passages referred to below.

marks and signs of the *mahāpuruṣa*. As noted above, this particular portion of passage VIII 5 forms the textual basis for *AA* vss. 8.1-8.32 on *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*.[29] But it comprises only a small portion of that passage.

In the rest of passage VIII 5, the bodhisattvas (having engaged in the four means of gathering disciples) employ many methods of teaching their disciples the Buddhist path, all of which involve comprehension of the emptiness of own-being, the non-perception of things, etc.: the *PP's* central theme. The bodhisattvas train their disciples in the comprehension of affliction and purification, in accomplishing the benefit of beings even while [ultimately] not perceiving any beings, in the six perfections, in the ten virtuous practices on the Buddha path, in non-duality, in conventional symbolization, etc., and finally in the nature of *nirvāṇa*.[30] There are a total of twenty-seven such types of bodhisattva activity described in this very long and detailed *PP* passage. *AA* vs. 8.33 formally links the *nairmāṇikakāya* of the Yogācāra tradition to the entire content of *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5. Then *AA* vss. 8.34-8.40 name and list the twenty-seven activities described at length in *PP* passage VIII 5. The verses are as follows:

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29 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section VIII 5.2. *Large Sutra*, pp. 580-587.
30 Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, sections VIII 5.3-VIII 5.27. *Large Sutra*, pp. 587-643.

*karoti yena citrāṇi hitāni jagataḥ samam/*
*ā bhavāt so 'nupacchinnaḥ kāyo nairmāṇiko muneḥ//* AA 8.33

*tathā karmāpy anucchinnam asyā saṃsāram iṣyate/*
*gatīnāṃ śamanaṃ karma saṃgrahe ca caturvidhe//* AA 8.34

*niveśanaṃ sasaṃkleśe vyavadānāvabodhane/*
*sattvānām arthayāthātmye ṣaṭsu pāramitāsu ca//* AA 8.35

*buddhamārge prakṛtyaiva śūnyatāyāṃ dvayakṣaye/*
*saṃkete 'nupalambhe ca paripāke ca dehināṃ//* AA 8.36

*bodhisattvasya mārge 'bhiniveśasya nivāraṇe/*
*bodhiprāptau jinakṣetraviśuddhau niyatiṃ prati//* AA 8.37

*aprameye ca sattvārthe buddhasevādike guṇe/*
*bodher aṅgeṣv anāśe ca karmaṇāṃ satyadarśane//* AA 8.38

*viparyāsaprahāṇe ca tadavastukatānaye/*
*vyavadāne sasambhāre saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛte prati//* AA 8.39

*vyatibhedāparijñāne nirvāṇe ca niveśanaṃ/*
*dharmakāyasya karmedam saptaviṃśatidhā matam//* AA 8.40

The Body of the Sage in its Emanation (*nairmāṇikakāya*) is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world]. AA 8.33

Likewise, it is agreed, its activity (*karma*) is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: the activity which pacifies the states of rebirth, which establishes [beings] in the fourfold means of collecting [disciples], AA 8.34

which establishes (*niveśanaṃ*) them in the comprehension of affliction and purification, in the proper nature of the welfare of beings, and in the six perfections, AA 8.35

which establishes them in the Buddha path, in the emptiness of intrinsic nature, in non-duality, in conventional symbolization (*saṃkete*), in non-perception, and in the maturing of embodied beings, AA 8.36

which establishes them in the bodhisattva path, in preventing adherence [to things], in the attainment of enlightenment (*bodhi*), in the purity of a Buddha's realm, in definite destiny, *AA* 8.37

which establishes them in the welfare of limitless beings, in the excellence of attending upon and devoting onesself to the Buddhas, in the limbs of enlightenment, in the non-wastefulness of deeds (*karma*), and in the vision of the truths, *AA* 8.38

which establishes them in the elimination of false views, in the method of [ascertaining] the baselessness of those [views], in purification and its accompanying accumulation, in the knowledge of non-distinction between conditioned and unconditioned, *AA* 8.39

and which establishes them [finally] in *nirvāṇa*.
This is regarded as the twenty-sevenfold activity of the Dharma Body (*dharmakāya*).[31] *AA* 8.40

These verses function neatly as a complete set. Verse 8.33 defines the *nairmāṇikakāya* as that which carries out varied benefits for the world, the "benefits," being his various actions which assist and teach beings. In other words, it defines *nairmāṇikakāya* primarily as the means through which the Sage (*muni*, i.e. Buddha) carries out his extensive activities. Then verses 8.34-8.40 proceed to detail those activities in accord with *PP* passage VIII 5. In particular, the logical linkage between *nairmāṇikakāya* (as the agent of activity) and the activity it carries out, is made quite explicit through the parallelism of Sanskrit expression in verses 8.33 and 8.34. The second half of verse 8.33 (which leads into the first half of verse 8.34) characterizes the *nairmāṇikakāya* with two very specific

31 Amano, 1975, pp. 290-292.

expressions: it is uninterrupted (*anupacchinnaḥ*) for as long as the existence [of the world] (*ā bhavāt*). The first half of verse 8.34 specifically echoes those characteristics in its expression: "likewise, ..., its activity is uninterrupted (*anucchinnaḥ*) for as long as cyclic existence lasts (*ā saṃsāram*)." Vs. 8.34's term "*asya*," "its," should refer back to the subject of the preceding verse 8.33, which is the *nairmāṇikakāya*. The term "*asya*," together with the parallelism in expression between vs. 8.33b and 8.34a (which is obviously intentional), draws the two verses close together semantically. Clearly, verse 8.33 functions together with verses 8.34-8.40 as a block to describe the *nairmāṇikakāya* together with its activities.

The second half of verse 8.40 might surprise the reader at first, because it concludes the entire set of verses 8.34-8.40 by ascribing all activities listed in them to the "*dharmakāya*." This seems strange at first reading, because vss. 8.33-8.39 seemed to read so smoothly as a discussion of the *nairmāṇikakāya* and *its* activities. Why then would there be a final ascription of all activities to "*dharmakāya*" at the very end of the verses? In fact, if vs. 8.40 is looked at not in isolation, but in its relation to the overall structure of the *AA*, its mode of expression makes complete sense and further supports our interpretation of *AA* chapter 8.

In section 2 of this chapter we pointed out the parallelism between *AA* vs. 1.17 (the table of contents for *AA* chapter 8) and *AA* vs. 9.2 (the conclusion of the book) in their use of the expressions "*dharmakāya sakāritraḥ*" (vs. 1.17) and "*dharmakāyaphalaṃ karma*" (vs. 9.2). We noted that, given their place in the overall structure of the *AA*, both

expressions must denote the *dharmakāya* as the overall subject matter and title of the *AA's* 8th chapter, *dharmakāya* taken as the total result of the path (*dharmakāyaphalaṃ*), together with its activity (*kāritra*, *karma*). The second half of verse 8.40 employs an equivalent phrase, "*dharmakāyasya karma*," "the activity of the *dharmakāya*." In doing so, the verse parallels vss. 1.17 and 9.2, and like them, probably employs that phrase to denote the *dharmakāya* in its inclusive sense (including all three *kāyas*), together with its activity (*karma*).

This becomes even clearer when we take note of the fact that vs. 8.40 is the *final verse* of the *AA's* entire 8th chapter. As such, we should not be surprised to find its author "wrapping everything up" by using the expression at the closing of his chapter which semantically includes within it the entire content of that chapter, "*dharmakāyasya karma*": the "*karma*" (which is the content of the final seven verses of the chapter) of the [resultant] "*dharmakāya*" (which comprises all three *kāyas* explained in the chapter). This, then, is the reason why the author chose the phrase "*dharmakāyasya karma*" for the final verse of chapter 8. It parallels the equivalent phrases of vss. 1.17 and 9.2, "*dharmakāya sakāritraḥ*" and "*dharmakāya...karma*," which also denoted the entire content of the *AA's* 8th chapter (see section 2 of this chapter on those phrases).

Another aspect of the *AA* which is a bit puzzling at first encounter is the prominence of "activity" as a buddhological category in its 8th chapter. As we saw delineated in vs. 1.17 (section 2 of this chapter above), four aspects of resultant *dharmakāya* are formally distinguished and set fourth as the four topics of the *AA's* 8th chapter, i.e. the three

*kāyas* and altruistic activity (*karma*, *kāritra*). Although the Yogācāra tradition also discusses the altruistic activity of buddhahood, it does not generally present that activity on a par with the three *kāyas* as part of the primary description of buddhahood. Instead, as we noted in chapter 5, section 5 above, it identifies the activity of buddhahood with the *nairmāṇikakāya*. In other words, when the Yogācāra tradition explains buddhahood in terms of the *kāyas*, it explains it simply as three-fold. Activity is not distinguished as a fourth topic distinct from *nairmāṇikakāya*. Yet, in the *AA*, resultant *dharmakāya* is formally described as four-fold: the three *kāyas* plus activity. Why?

Again, the explanation is clear when we keep in mind both of the textual traditions upon which the *AA's* 8th chapter is based. Although the terminology and concept of three *kāyas* comes from the Yogācāra tradition, the *PP* passages which are the textual basis for the 8th chapter are passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 as described above. And those passages devote comparatively little space to discussions of undefiled Buddha dharmas, marks and signs, etc. The vast majority of those *PP* passages is devoted to a very long description of numerous bodhisattva activities assisting and teaching beings. In these passages, it is worth noting, the activities are not actually ascribed to the Buddha himself. Rather, the Buddha observes limitless bodhisattvas as they manifest in all realms to work for beings; and he describes their activities. This *PP* textual material must have seemed to the *AA's* author a meager textual basis upon which to construct his entire 8th chapter describing buddhahood.

On the other hand, if all the activities described in these *PP* passages were interpreted as activities of the Buddha himself, by means of his emanations (*nirmāṇāḥ*) (taking the form of the limitless bodhisattvas described in the passages), the *PP* material would then become a plausible textual basis for an entire *AA* chapter on buddhahood, a chapter which makes a prominent place in its exposition for Buddha's activity. Although *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 do not specifically say the bodhisattvas they describe are emanations of the Buddha, other passages in the *PP sūtras* do certainly describe limitless emanations created by the Buddha as the central expounder of the sūtra. This is especially notable throughout the introductory portion of the Large *PP sūtra*, which sets the stage for its discourse and dialogues by describing numerous miraculous emanations created by the Buddha, which fill his audience of disciples with awe.[32]

This, then, is precisely the interpretation of *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5 which the *AA's* author chose. He took the *PP* passages which describe bodhisattva activities to be descriptions of the emanations (*nirmāṇāḥ*) of a Buddha. The twenty-seven types of activity described in those passages were then understood as the activities of the Buddha by means of his *nairmāṇikakāya*, his Emanation Body. Also imbedded within *PP* passage VIII 5, in one relatively small portion of it, were lists of undefiled dharmas and marks and signs. These the *AA's* author used as a textual anchor for his discussions of the *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya* of the Yogācāra tradition. Because the *nairmāṇikakāya* was already

32 See, for example, Conze, *Large Sutra*, pp. 37-44.

identified in the Yogācāra tradition so closely with a Buddha's activity (as explained in chapter 5, section 5 above), the entire content of passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 describing that activity, taken as a whole, served as the textual basis for *nairmāṇikakāya.*

In other words, *PP* passages VIII 4-VIII 5, upon which the *AA's* entire discussion of buddhahood is based, are actually a long description of altruistic bodhisattva activities, not a discussion of buddhahood or Buddha *kāyas* per se. It is altruistic activity itself, then, which is the subject matter of the entire textual basis in the *PP sūtra* for *AA* chapter 8. This required the *AA's* author at least to acknowledge the prominence of altruistic activity in his *PP* textual basis by elevating "activity" in his exposition of *AA* chapter 8 to the status of a principle aspect of buddhahood. "Activity" ("*karma*," "*kāritra*"), then, became one of the four fundamental topics of the *AA's* 8th chapter on buddhahood. The *PP* text basis required the *AA's* author to put the twenty-seven types of activity described in the *PP sūtra* on a par with the three *kāyas* of the Yogācāra tradition as a fourth, distinct topic. And this resulted in the *AA's* idiosyncratic analysis of buddhahood into four primary topics; not just the three *kāyas* of the Yogācāra tradition, but in addition, "activity" as the fourth topic. Whereas in the Yogācāra tradition, as we have seen, activity was simply identified with *nairmāṇikakāya* (chapter 5, section 5 above), the *PP* text basis required the *AA's* author to separate it out as a separate, fourth topic.

Let us look again more closely, then, at the specific way in which *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40 draw from both the Yogācāra and *PP* textual traditions.

*AA* vs. 8.33 defines the *nairmāṇikakāya* as that through which the Sage (*muni*) carries out the varied benefits for the world, i.e. as the means through which Buddha carries out his extensive activities. This parallels the primary definition of *nairmāṇikakāya* in the Yogācāra texts we have studied.[33]

We noted in chapter 5, section 5 above how, throughout early Yogācāra literature, it was specifically the *nairmāṇikakāya* from amongst the three *kāyas* which was identified with a Buddha's universal activity. Although the *sāmbhogikakāya* embodied a Buddha's shared enjoyment of dharma in a pure realm, the *nairmāṇikakāya* was identified as the universal agent of a Buddha's altruistic activity as it was understood to pervade the entire universe. The *nairmāṇikakāya* comprised a Buddha's infinite emanations into all realms of beings. For this reason, "*karma*," the fourth category in the Yogācāra 6-fold buddhological scheme, is identified in *MSA* 9.58 with a Buddha's "*nirmāṇas*," his limitless emanations (see chapter 5, section 5 for many other references). To identify *nairmāṇikakāya* with Buddha's *karma* (activity), then, was a fundamental part of early Yogācāra buddhology. On the one hand, then, the *AA's* author drew from the Yogācāra tradition in his identification of *nairmāṇikakāya* with a Buddha's benefits to the world through his extensive activities. At the same time, though, as we noted just above (and in chapter 7, section 2.B.4) the *PP* passages upon which the *AA's*

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33 *MSA* 9.60 and *bhāṣya*, *Msg* 10.1.3 and commentaries, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, Nishio, p. 125. See this thesis, chapter 4, section 4 and chapter 5, sections 2-5 for a fuller discussion of *nairmāṇikakāya* in Yogācāra buddhology.

author had to base all his comments on buddhahood comprised a long and detailed discussion of bodhisattva activities throughout the realms of beings (*PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5).

In *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40, then, it is clear that the author draws from both the Yogācāra tradition and the *PP* textual basis he had. And he does so in the same way we have noted for the other *kāyas* described earlier in chapter 8: the first verse makes the linkage between corresponding concepts in the two traditions, and several subsequent verses then detail the specific content of the *PP* text basis. Following this pattern, he makes the explicit linkage in vs. 8.33 between the Yogācāra conception of *nairmāṇikakāya* and the corresponding *PP* textual material which teaches the various altruistic activities (i.e. *PP* passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 taken as a whole). Then, in vss. 8.34-8.40, he details the content of that *PP* text basis, particularly the twenty-seven activites decribed in passage VIII 5. Again, the genius of the *AA's* author lies in his having found a way to conform to both patterns of buddhological thought established in the two textual traditions he drew from, while, at the same time, explicitly drawing specific correspondences between those traditions for the first time in the history of Indian Buddhism.

As we noted in chapter 6 above, Haribhadra interpreted "*dharmakāya*" in *AA* vs. 8.40 as his fourth *kāya*, the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*. He thought that the term "*dharmakāya*" appeared in vs. 8.40 in order to indicate that it is just the "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*," the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis, which serves as the fundamental cause of a Buddha's activity. Haribhadra's interpretation of *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness made

it a permanent, which could not logically be taken as a "cause" of a Buddha's activity, an impermanent. And the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were just manifestations of a Buddha's gnosis, hence of his *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*. Since, for Haribhadra, logic entailed that the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* be taken as the source of enlightened activity, he read his logical conclusion into *AA* vs. 8.40, and saw it as an explicit ascription of Buddha's "*karma*" to his [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*, resulting in vs. 8.40's phrase: "*dharmakāyasya karma*."

But as we noted above, the verses 8.33-8.40 in the Sanskrit read smoothly together as a block. And vss. 8.33-8.34 clearly identify the *nairmāṇikakāya* as the agent of the activities listed in vss. 8.34-8.40. Therefore Haribhadra, to support his ascription of all the activities to the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya* of verse 8.40, had to read vs. 8.34 not as a continuation of the the train of thought in the preceding verse (vs. 8.33 about *nairmāṇikakāya*), but as a continuation of the discussion on the pervasiveness and eternality of *dharmakāya* way back in vs. 8.11 (see chapter 6 above). Furthermore, all the textual, historical, and philological considerations we have made throughout this chapter and in the previous chapters discredit Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* chapter 8 while strongly substantiating Ārya Vimuktisena's three *kāya* interpretation, all the way from the chapter's table of contents (vs. 1.17) to its final verse (vs. 8.40). Haribhadra's interpretations of *AA* 8 are creative and logical, but are not based on the language or history of the text upon which he was commenting.

As we have seen, then, the special project of the *AA's* author in his 8th chapter, to map Yogācāra concepts onto *PP* material, created some hermeneutical pitfalls for commentators of later centuries. Although he was brilliant in each portion of his chapter at finding a compromise of expression which could communicate buddhological patterns of both textual traditions at once, his result was an idiosyncratic product which could no longer be read easily as the simple expression of either tradition. *AA* vss. 1.17, 8.1-8.6, 8.12, and 8.33-40 all presented special problems of interpretation for later commentators which have been noted in chapter 6 above and in this chapter. It appears that the commentators who commented on the *AA's* 8th chaper closest to the period of its composition, most notably Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early 6th century), could see it clearly for what it was, and therefore interpreted it accurately (Bhadanta Vimuktisena, the next commentator, just followed Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretations of it). In fact, Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation of the 8th chapter appears to be so textually and historically accurate and incisive that I sometimes wonder if he might not have been the author of the *AA* himself.

In any case, by the time Haribhadra composed his *AA* commentaries (late 8th to early 9th century), there was definitely a special logical and Madhyamakan agenda on his mind, apparent in his analysis of the chapter. The elasticity of Sanskrit versification permitted him to propose innovative (and unlikely) interpretations of the *AA's* verses in order to further that agenda (see chapter 6's and this chapter's discussions of vss. 1.17, 8.1-8.6, and 8.33-8.40). It is apparent, then, that Haribhadra

interpreted *AA* chapter 8 not so much for philological and historical accuracy, but in order to clarify certain logical and Madhyamakan issues concerning buddhahood which were of importance in his time.

6. Hermeneutic Problems Created by the Abhisamayālaṃkāra's Tibetan Translation

In general, the Tibetan canon is one of the most important sources we have for reconstructing Sanskrit texts which are no longer extant, and for checking late Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts which are often in more corrupt form then the manuscripts from which the Tibetan translations were made centuries earlier. Tibetan translations of Indian Sanskrit texts constitute one of our most powerful tools for research in Indian Buddhism.

However, because Tibetan has much fewer grammatical forms at its disposal than Sanskrit for communicating nuances of syntax and meaning, not all the subtle nuances of Sanskrit can come through in Tibetan translation. Of course, this is just part of the larger problem of translation from any language into another. But, as we have seen, a number of verses within and related to *AA* chapter 8 presented serious problems of interpretation for later commentators. And the Tibetan translation of those verses further increases the ambiguities already inherent in the Sanskrit. Although I consulted the Tibetan translation and Tibetan commentaries extensively prior to analyzing *AA* chapter 8, my analysis

above had to rely primarily on the Sanskrit of the *AA's* verses, rather than on the Tibetan. And even then, the Sanskrit expression in the verses had to be contextualized by conducting a detailed study of the two main Indian textual traditions upon which the verses were based. Through a combination of philological and historical-critical methods, then, an appropriate conclusion could be reached as to what the *AA's* author had intended.

But for Tibetan scholars who read the *AA's* verses primarily or exclusively through their Tibetan translation, the hermeneutical problems were multiplied. In particular, *AA* vss. 1.17, 8.1-8.6, and 8.33-8.40, which were the center of controversy in India from the time of Haribhadra, continued to be controversial in Tibet through the centuries even up to the present day (see chapter 6 above for discussion of the different Indian interpretations of those verses). *AA* vss. 1.17 and 8.1-8.6 (which establish the framework for all other verses of the *AA's* 8th chapter) became much more ambiguous in Tibetan translation than they were in Sanskrit. The Sanskrit of vs. 1.17, the English translation, and then the Tibetan translation which appears in the Tibetan canon are presented below:

> *svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
> *dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//* *AA* 1.17

> In its essence, with its enjoyment, and in its emanation as well,
> The Dharma Body, with its activity, is proclaimed as four-fold.
> *AA* 1.17

*ngo bo nyid longs rdzogs bcas dang/*
*de bzhin gzhan pa sprul pa ni/*
*chos sku mdzad pa dang bcas pa/*
*rnam pa bzhir ni yang dag brjod//.*[34] Tibetan *AA* 1.17

The reader may want to review our analysis of this verse in section 2 of this chapter. There we made special note of the *taddhita* morphologies of the terms "*svābhāvikakāya*" and "*nairmāṇikakāya,*" which, taken together with the possessive forms of "*sasāmbhogo*" and "*sakāritraḥ,*" mean that all four terms are in an adjectival form and, as a set, should modify another term which is a masculine, singular noun. The only noun they could modify is "*dharmakāya.*" Furthermore, the past passive verb "*samudīritaḥ*" is also singular and should have a singular noun as object. Again, "*dharmakāya*" is the only simple singular noun. This sort of grammatical analysis can not be done if one only reads the Tibetan translation, because the terms "*ngo bo nyid*" ("*svābhāvika*") and "*sprul pa*" ("*nairmāṇika*") lose their *taddhita* morphology in the Tibetan, making them appear to be nouns, and the verb "*yang dag brjod*" ("*samudīritaḥ*") gives no indication as to whether it is singular or plural. This means that in the Tibetan, the verse looks a bit more plausibly like it could be indicating four *kāyas* with the four terms "*ngo bo nyid,*" "*longs rdzogs,*" "*sprul pa,*" and "*chos sku*" all functioning as nouns (the Tibetan "*longs rdzogs bcas*" is still a possessive form, making it adjectival, but

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34 Pk Vol. 88, 5184, fol. 3.3.3. A slightly different Tibetan translation of vs. 1.17 appears in Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* (Pk 5191, fol. 297-3-4) where the third line of the verse becomes, "*chos sku mdzad par bcas pa ste/....*" This makes no difference to the observations which follow.

that fact is a little easier to overlook when all three other terms for the supposed four *kāyas* appear to be nouns).

*AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 also became much more ambiguous in Tibetan translation. In fact, the Tibetan translation tends to add more weight toward Haribhadra's interpretation that the *AA* teaches a fourth *kāya*, a "*dharmakāya*" which is the collection of undefiled dharmas listed in the verses. Below is the Sanskrit of verses 8.2-8.6 and our English translation based upon it. Vs. 8.6 is separated from the others because it will become the focus of a problem in the Tibetan translation.

*bodhipakṣāpramāṇāni vimokṣā anupūrvaśaḥ/*
*navātmikā samāpattiḥ kṛtsnaṃ daśavidhātmakam//* *AA* 8.2
*abhibhvāyatanāny aṣṭa prakārāṇi prabhedataḥ/*
*araṇā praṇidhijñānam abhijñāḥ pratisaṃvidaḥ//* *AA* 8.3
*sarvākārāś catasro 'tha śuddhayo vaśitā daśa/*
*balāni daśa catvāri vaiśāradyāny arakṣaṇam//* *AA* 8.4
*trividhaṃ smṛtyupasthānaṃ tridhāsaṃmoṣa-dharmatā/*
*vasanāyāḥ samudghāto mahatī karuṇā jane//* *AA* 8.5

*āveṇikā muner eva dharmā ye 'ṣṭadaśeritāḥ/*
*sarvākārajñatā ceti dharmakāyo 'bhidhīyate//* *AA* 8.6

"The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, *AA* 8.2-8.5

the qualities unique to the Sage which are proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated. *AA* 8.6

*AA* verses 8.2-8.5 were translated into Tibetan without complication. But verse 8.6 was translated with a slight inaccuracy: a misplacement of the particle "*zhes*" ("*iti*"), which subtly but profoundly alters the meaning of the the entire set of verses of which it is a part. Below is the Tibetan translation of verse 8.6 and its meaning in English:

*thub pa kho na'i ma 'dres chos/*
*bco brgyad bshad pa gang yin dang/*
*rnam pa thams cad mkhyen nyid dang/*
*chos kyi sku zhes brjod pa yin/.*[35] *AA* 8.6

..., the qualities unique to the Sage which are proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience are called "the *dharmakāya.*" *AA* 8.6

Notice the difference between the English translation of vs. 8.6 based on the Sanskrit and that based on the Tibetan. The Sanskrit original places the particle "*iti*" just after the list of undefiled dharmas and before the term "*dharmakāya.*" This marks off the list of undefiled dharmas as a set of terms by which the *dharmakāya* is denominated. In these Sanskrit verses, the *AA* does not directly identify the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 as being the collection of undefiled dharmas. It says merely that the *dharmakāya* is *denominated* or conventionally designated in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas (see section 3 of this chapter for a more detailed

[35] Pk 5184, fol. 7-4-4 to 7-4-5. sDe dge edition is identical.

analysis of the verses). This accords with both the *PP* and Yogācāra traditions' common patterns of discussing *dharmakāya*. In both traditions, *dharmakāya* or *svābhāvikakāya* is never identified with the collection of undefiled dharmas per se, because it is a realization of suchness beyond such conceptual differentiation. But both the *PP* and Yogācāra traditions retain a place for the list of dharmas as a lesser, phenomenal description of *dharmakāya*.

The Tibetan for vs. 8.6 departs from the Sanskrit in a small but important way. The Sanskrit particle "*iti*" becomes the Tibetan "*zhes*," which serves the same grammatical function as its counterpart. But the Tibetan translation places the term "*zhes*" not after the list of undefiled dharmas (as in the Sanskrit) but after the Tibetan word for *dharmakāya*: "*chos kyi sku zhes brjod pa yin.*" In the Sanskrit, the placing of "*iti*" after the list of undefiled dharmas meant that it was the *dharmakāya* which was denominated by the list of undefiled dharmas. But because the Tibetan places the equivalent term "*zhes*" after the word for *dharmakāya*, the Tibetan text now says the opposite of the Sanskrit: the undefiled dharmas are denominated "*dharmakāya*," i.e. the undefiled dharmas are called "*dharmakāya*." This directly identifies the collection of the undefiled dharmas per se as "*dharmakāya*." By directly identifying the collection of undefiled dharmas with the *dharmakāya*, the Tibetan translation runs counter not only to the Sanskrit, but also to the *PP* and Yogācāra textual traditions upon which the *AA* is based. Nevertheless, if read literally from the Tibetan alone, vss. 8.2-8.6 appear to identify a fourth *kāya* which is called "*dharmakāya*," which is not just described by but *is* the

collection of undefiled dharmas, and which is therefore distinguished from the *svābhāvikakāya* of verse 8.1 (the *svābhāvikakāya* being the "innate nature" (*prakṛti*) of those dharmas, not the dharmas themselves).

Based on the Tibetan translation, the great scholar and founder of the dGe lugs pa sect, Tsong kha pa, read *AA* verses 8.2-8.6 as a direct teaching of a fourth *kāya*: "*dharmakāya*" of verse 8.6 being the fourth *kāya* which is the collection of undefiled dharmas. He therefore found what he thought was a clear textual basis in the *AA* to support Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the text. For Tsong kha pa, the verses read very simply and clearly: "[the undefiled dharmas] are called '*dharmakāya*'," which plainly identified the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 as a fourth *kāya*. This seemed so clear in the Tibetan that he was a bit surprised at the difficulty certain Indian and Tibetan commentators had at seeing this simple "fact." He wrote in his *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*:

> Upon examination it does appear that the [undefiled] dharmas were actually taught as a fourth *kāya* in the Philosophical Vehicle (*mtshan nyid theg pa*, the non-Tantric vehicle which includes the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*). Doesn't the name of the fourth *kāya* ["*dharmakāya*"] appear clearly in the text of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* [chapter 8] which begins [with verse 8.1]: "The *svābhāvikakāya* of the Sage" followed by [verses 8.2-8.6 which conclude by saying that the undefiled dharmas] "... are called the *dharmakāya*" [vs. 8.6]? [Those who interpret the *AA* as a three *kāya* text] argue that the expression ["*dharmakāya*"] refers to the *dharmatākāya*, the suffix "*tā*" having been elided. When one seeks for a [hidden] significance in the text, [one can find] a basis for arguing whether it teaches a *dharmatākāya* or a *dharmikāya*. But when the text is read literally, it does teach a separate [fourth] *kāya* [where vs. 8.6 says the undefiled dharmas "are called the *dharmakāya*"]. So what need is there to seek other significance [in the text]? For us the assertion [of a fourth

> *kāya*] is proven simply by the statement which is right there [in the text], while you [who interpret the *AA* as three *kāya* text] assert something which was not stated in the text at all![36]

Tsong kha pa's discussion of *dharmatākāya* above refers to a point raised by Ārya Vimuktisena and his followers in India which we will take up in the next chapter. Here we note only that Tsong kha pa, based on his reading of the Tibetan translation of *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6, thought he found in them a clear and direct statement of a fourth *kāya*, the *dharmakāya* consisting of the undefiled dharmas, what Haribhadra called the "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya.*" Tsong kha pa's principal reasons for agreeing with Haribhadra's general assertion of four *kāyas* were, like Haribhadra's, inferential reasons (based on logic and Madhyamaka analysis).[37] But his belief that four *kāyas* were explicitly taught in the *AA's* 8th chapter, and that Haribhadra's interpretation of that chapter was therefore philologically accurate, was based particularly on his reading of vss. 8.2-8.6 in the Tibetan.

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36 Tsong kha pa, *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fol. 226a1-3.

37 He discusses those reasons in *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 225b5-227b3, and 239b1-243a3. They will be discussed in chapter 12 below.

# CHAPTER IX

# ĀRYA VIMUKTISENA'S INTERPRETATION OF ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA CHAPTER 8: THE CORRELATION OF YOGĀCĀRA BUDDHOLOGY WITH THE LARGE PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRA

## 1. Introduction

As we noted in chapter 7 above, Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* is the earliest extant commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.[1] We have little reliable historical data on its author. Most of our information derives from the history of Buddhism by the Tibetan scholar Taranatha (late 16th to early 17th century) which was written too many centuries removed from Ārya Vimuktisena to be accepted at face value. Taranatha reports that he was a contemporary of both Dignāga (ca. 440-520 CE) and Bhāvaviveka (ca. 500-570? CE), which leads some modern scholars to date Ārya Vimuktisena to the early

[1] The first chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* was published in an edited Sanskrit edition by C. Pensa, *L'Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena* (Rome, ISMEO, 1967). The rest of the Sanskrit manuscript is not generally available. Chapters 2 through 8 are available only in Tibetan translation, on the basis of which our analysis of chapters 7 and 8 below are made. We have consulted both the Peking and sDe dge editions.

6th century; but this may well be revised if new historical evidence appears.[2] Although Haribhadra (late 8th century) refers in his *Āloka* to commentaries on the *AA* by Asanga and Vasubandhu (Wogihara, p. 1), he never quotes them. They are not extant in any language, and Ārya Vimuktisena never mentions them. It is quite possible, then, that Ārya Vimuktisena's *vṛtti* is not only the oldest available commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, but also the first. It is even possible that Ārya Vimuktisena himself could have been the author of the *AA*. As we noted in chapter 7 above, the primary project of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary was to identify, by quote or paraphrase, each passage of the 25,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* which corresponded to and was the textual basis for each section of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. If he himself composed the *AA*, he was certainly in a position to know what that correspondence was. His own independent comments on the meaning of the *AA's* verses were generally terse.

At the end of chapter 7 above, based on text-critical and historical considerations, we concluded that *AA* chapter 8 represents a mapping of Yogācāra buddhological categories onto the textual material of the Large *PP sūtra*, and as such teaches three *kāyas*. In the previous chapter, we presented much further evidence to support this hypothesis. There we reviewed the overall patterns of buddhological thought in both the *PP* and Yogācāra traditions, examined the place of the 8th chapter in the *AA's*

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[2] Ruegg, "Ārya and Bhadanta Vimuktisena on the Gotra-Theory of the Prajñāpāramitā," WZKSO, 12-13, 1968, pp. 306-307; Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, p. 86.

overall structure, examined the precise Sanskrit expression of the relevant verses, and drew the correspondences between *AA* 8 and the parallel patterns of expression found in the Yogācāra and *PP* textual traditions. At the conclusion of chapter 7 above, we briefly noted that Ārya Vimuktisena also read *AA* chapter 8 as a mapping of the three Yogācāra *kāyas* onto the Large *PP sūtra*. In this chapter, we will examine portions of his commentary more closely.

## 2. The Correspondence between Ārya Vimuktisena's Gnoseology and the Svābhāvikakāya of Yogācāra

Earlier we noted that the Yogācāra theory of *svābhāvikakāya* was not just an independent speculative theory, but developed within and drew its meaning from a matrix of basic Yogācāra conceptions regarding yogic praxis, gnoseology and enlightenment. The theory of *svābhāvikakāya* was a natural extrapolation from Yogācāra theories of yogic praxis and gnoseology (see chapter 4, section 6 above).

*AA* chapter 7 (which immediately precedes the exposition of buddhahood in *AA* chapter 8) is a brief treatise on Mahāyāna gnoseology based on passages of the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*. The subject of the chapter is referred to as "*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*" (the "one-moment comprehension") and as "*ekakṣaṇa abhisamaya*" (the "one-moment

realization").[3] According to Haribhadra's commentaries, the bodhisattva who has reached the very end of the Mahāyāna path has a special flash of profound insight an instant before the attainment of buddhahood. It is this instant of gnosis through which the bodhisattva, in the very next moment, attains full enlightenment, the resultant *dharmakāya*. This moment of gnosis just prior to enlightenment is referred to as the "one-moment comprehension," the title and subject matter of *AA* chapter 7. Such an understanding of *AA* chapter 7 has been generally accepted in modern scholarship because most modern scholars have based their understanding either on Haribhadra or on commentaries by his Tibetan followers.[4]

Unlike Haribhadra, Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary on *AA* chapter 7 nowhere identifies the "one-moment comprehension" (*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*) as the gnosis of a bodhisattva the moment before enlightenment. In fact, as we shall see, comments he makes near the end of his discussion on *AA* 7 specifically identify the "one-moment comprehension" as the gnosis of a Buddha, the gnosis of enlightenment itself. It would appear that Haribhadra understood the expression "one-moment comprehension" (*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*), at least in part, to

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[3] *AA* vs. 1.16 (Amano, 1975, p. 16); *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1985, pp. 138; *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 909-911; *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 91-5-1 to 92-4-5.
[4] Obermiller, "The Doctrine of Prajñā-pāramitā," p. 71; Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā Literature*, p.106; Galloway, "Sudden Enlightenment in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the Lalitavistara, and the Śikṣāsamuccaya," pp. 140-146. Galloway's entire paper treats *AA* chapter 7 on *ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha* (one-moment comprehension) as a "small treatise on sudden enlightenment." Since a *buddha* is already enlightened, Galloway seems to be assuming, in accord with Haribhadra, that the *ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha* is the realization of a *bodhisattva* just prior to buddhahood.

mean a gnosis which lasts just a moment prior to enlightenment, while Ārya Vimuktisena understood the term primarily to mean the capacity of a Buddha's gnosis to literally comprehend everything in a single moment (i.e. the capacity which a Buddha has in every moment to know everything in that moment). This requires further study. But in any case, Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks on *AA* chapter 7 form an important preliminary discussion to his remarks on *AA* chapter 8. We saw that the theory of *svābhāvikakāya* was based on Yogācāra gnoseology and yogic praxis. Similarly, Ārya Vimuktisena's gnoseology (particularly as expressed in his comments on *AA* 7), frames his understanding of *svābhāvikakāya*, expressed in his comments on *AA* chapter 8. Before examining his comments on *AA* 8, then, we present below most of his comments on *AA* chapter 7 (for brevity, we leave out several of the *PP sūtra* quotes which he gives and some of his extraneous remarks).

The 7th chapter of the *AA* is very short, consisting of only five verses. The one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*) is described by reference to its four aspects, comprising the four topics of the chapter. Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the four aspects as follows: 1. The quality of including in one-moment [of comprehension] all the undefiled dharmas, such as giving, etc., 2. the one-moment comprehension of all undefiled dharmas in the state of matured *dharmatā*, 3. the one-moment comprehension of all dharmas as qualityless, 4. the one-moment comprehension of all dharmas in their character of non-duality.[5]

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[5] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 91-5-3, 92-1-5 to 92-1-6, 92-2-2, and 92-3-2.

According to Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, the first two verses of the chapter describe the first aspect of the one-moment comprehension, and each of the remaining three verses describes the three remaining aspects respectively. His comments follow:

> Now the comprehension of one mind moment is to be explained. The [following question from the *PP sūtra*] is asked so the one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisamaya*) would be set forth: "Oh Bhagavan, when a bodhisattva, a great being, practises the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), how does just one moment of his mind possess all six perfections, ...?"[6] The one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisamaya*) has four aspects, [the first of which] is the quality of including in one moment [of comprehension] all the undefiled dharmas, giving, etc. Concerning this, [*Abhisamayālaṃkāra* vs. 7.1 says:]
>
> "From the accumulation of all the undefileds by giving and so forth, even though [they were] accumulated gradually, there is the one-moment comprehension of the Sage: this is to be known."[7] *AA* vs. 7.1
>
> Because the perfections of giving and so forth are possessed by the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), [and all undefiled dharmas] all the way up to the eighty excellent signs are possessed by it, [that] non-dual cognition, that one-moment comprehension itself includes in its comprehension all virtuous qualities. Fixed in that undefiled mind, giving is performed without perceiving any sign of who gives what to whom. That is precisely the one-moment comprehension in which there is no perception of any dharma.[8]

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6 Quote from *PP sūtra*: Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the start of section 7.1; *Gilgit Manuscript*, p. 11, *Large Sutra*, p. 556.
7 Amano, 1975, p. 254.
8 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 91-5-1 to 91-5-7.

Here in his comments on *AA* vs. 7.1, Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisamaya*) with the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). As noted in chapter 3 above, the perfection of wisdom described in the *PP sūtras* is a non-dual gnosis of suchness (*tathatā*), a direct realization of the emptiness of self-existence of all dharmas (*sarvadharmasvabhāva śūnyatā*). As the highest perception of emptiness, it is often described in the *sūtras* as the "non-perception" of any dharma. Following these remarks, Ārya Vimuktisena paraphrases the corresponding *PP sūtra* passage which advocates the accomplishment of all perfections and other virtues by "dedicating them through 'non-perception.'" Then he explicates *AA* vs. 7.2:

> But how, when one has entered into a meditation based on just one undefiled dharma [i.e. the perfection of wisdom], are all undefiled dharmas included? In response to this problem, [*AA* vs. 7.2] presents an example taken from everyday life:
>
> "Just as a person, with a single kick, moves the whole water wheel at once, so is the one-moment gnosis."[9] *AA* vs. 7.2
>
> In other words, the [one-moment comprehension] occurs from the force of previously propelled [virtue].[10]

This completes Ārya Vimuktisena's comments on the first topic of *AA* chapter 7: "the quality of including in one-moment [of comprehension] all the undefiled dharmas." Next, he comments on *AA* vs. 7.3, concerning the second topic of *AA* chapter 7:

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9 Amano, 1975, p. 256.

10 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-1-3 to 92-1-5.

On the one-moment comprehension of all undefiled dharmas in the state of matured dharmatā, [*AA* vs. 7.3] says:

"When the matured dharmatā state, the essence of all virtues, the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) has arisen, then is there the gnosis in a single moment."[11] *AA* vs. 7.3

This verse also explicitly identifies the one-moment comprehension or gnosis (*ekakṣaṇe jñānam*) with the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). Ārya Vimuktisena next quotes the *PP sūtra* passage which corresponds to this verse. He then comments on the third topic of *AA* chapter 7:

On the comprehension in one moment of all dharmas as qualityless, [*AA* vs. 7.4] says:

"When one is situated in dharmas as like dreams, then by the practices of giving, etc., one obtains in one moment the qualitylessness of dharmas."[12] *AA* vs. 7.4

[The objection might be raised that] it seems that the qualities of the dharmas which are so different from each other could not be included in the comprehension of one dharma [i.e. in the perfection of wisdom alone]. In that case, it would follow that there could be no one-moment comprehension. It is as answer to this that the [*PP sūtra* passage] is taught which begins: "Subhuti, when the bodhisattva great being practises the perfection of wisdom, abiding in the five aggregates which are like a dream, ..." and goes up to "he knows all dharmas [vast] as an ocean are qualityless." This teaches the one-moment comprehension of the *qualitylessness* of all dharmas.[13]

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11 Amano, 1975, p. 256.

12 Amano, 1975, p. 258.

13 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-2-2 to 92-2-5.

Ārya Vimuktisena is saying that all dharmas, even though distinct from each other, can be included in a one-moment comprehension of the perfection of wisdom through its perception of the single qualitylessness which they all share. He briefly discusses that part of the *PP sūtra* passage and then continues:

> At the time of giving [and the other virtues], whether interferences occur or not, by acting in emptiness, it becomes the supreme practice. Having experienced the collection [of merit from virtue] as serviceable, upon the one-moment comprehension of all dharmas as qualityless, there is the non-differentiation of dharmas, just the one taste. Because of that one fully comprehends the essential object.[14]

Ārya Vimuktisena is saying that although there are many different phenomena and qualities (dharmas), all can be comprehended in a single moment through the perception of the one quality they all share, their qualitylessness (*alakṣaṇatvam*), i.e. their emptiness of self-existence. That single-moment comprehension is the *prajñāpāramitā*, the perfection of wisdom, and it knows all phenomena through their one taste (*ekarasa*) of emptiness or suchness. Ārya Vimuktisena makes further remarks drawn from the *sūtra*. Then he comments on *AA* vs. 7.5 and on the fourth topic of *AA* 7:

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[14] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 92-2-6 to 92-2-8.

On the one-moment comprehension of all dharmas in their character of non-duality, [*AA* vs. 7.5] says:

"One does not even see the dream and its seer in a dual way. In one moment, one sees the non-dual thatness (*tattvam*) of dharmas." *AA* vs. 7.5

Ārya Vimuktisena quotes the corresponding *PP sūtra* passage on the dream-like dharmas which says that when a bodhisattva practices the perfection of wisdom, he does not see the dream, nor does he see the experiencer of the dream. The dream-like dharmas and the perfection of wisdom are not separate. They are utterly non-dual. The *sūtra* passage from which he quotes goes on to say: "He [the bodhisattva] sees all dharmas as included within the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), but he does not perceive those dharmas. Why? Because those very dharmas and that perfection of wisdom are non-dual and undivided. Why? Because there is no differentiation of the dharmas. All dharmas are undifferentiated through their identification with the *dharmadhātu*, with suchness (*tathatā*), with the limit of reality (*bhūtakoṭi*)."[15] Ārya Vimuktisena makes further remarks concerning that non-differentiation, and continues:

But if all dharmas are undifferentiated, there should be no teaching of virtuous and non-virtuous dharmas, etc. [which differentiates them as "virtuous," "non-virtuous," etc.]. And yet there is such an expression of them as such [taught in *sūtra*]. Therefore [the *PP sūtra*] describes [Subhuti] seeking the reason why they are expressed as [differentiated], and then discusses the

[15] Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section 7.4; *Gilgit Manuscript*, p. 33; *Large Sutra*, p. 571.

inexpressibility of all dharmas in their *dharmatā* [their ultimate nature]. And likewise [the *PP sūtra*] discusses the skill in the essential nature of all dharmas (*sarvadharmasvabhāvakuśalaḥ*), the complete accomplishment, which is designated as the *dharmakāya*. Understood in that way, the [synopsis of *AA* chapter 7 in vs. 1.16 which says:] "the one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*) is four-fold in its character," is seen in its relation to that stage, [the *dharmakāya*, the subject of *AA* chapter 8 and vs. 1.17].

[The objection could be raised that] it is said in *sūtra*: "The śravaka āryas attend to suffering as suffering, attend to the source [of suffering] as the source, and attend to the path as the path. Through their undefiled attention, they distinguish the associated dharmas." Doesn't the theory of the one-moment comprehension contradict this? No, there is no such contradiction, because such statements explicitly refer to ārya śrāvakas, whereas this [the one-moment comprehension] is the realization (*abhisamaya*) of a Buddha.[16]

In the comments above, Ārya Vimuktisena refers to the *PP sūtra* at the end of the passage corresponding to *AA* chapter 7.[17] In that passage, Subhuti asks how it is, if all dharmas are undifferentiated, that they are distinguished as virtuous and non-virtuous, etc. (precisely as they are taught throughout the *sūtra*). The Bhagavat (Buddha) replies by asking whether there is, within the *dharmatā* (the "thingness," the ultimate nature) of the dharmas, any expression of them. Subhuti says no. The Bhagavat then describes how the bodhisattva, practising perfect wisdom which does not perceive any dharma, through his "skill in the essential nature of dharmas" (*sarvadharmasvabhāvakuśalaḥ*), completes the path to enlightenment and matures other beings. Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the

[16] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, 5185, fol. 92-3-6 to 92-4-2.

[17] Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, end of section 7.4; *Gilgit Manuscript*, p.33 (Sanskrit), p. 163 (English); *Large Sutra*, pp. 571-572.

expression "skill in the essential nature of dharmas," (i.e. the perfection of wisdom discussed throughout the passage), as the *dharmakāya*, and therefore considers this section of *sūtra* (with *AA* chapter 7 based upon it) as integrally related to the next section of *sūtra* (*AA* chapter 8's discussion of *dharmakāya* based upon it).

Ārya Vimuktisena's comments are packed with implications for his buddhology. His discussion leading into the quote above concerned both the ultimate nature of all dharmas, and the perfection of wisdom which knows that nature in a non-dual way, and through that, knows all dharmas at once (the "one-moment comprehension"). It is this: the "skill" in the essential nature of all phenomena (i.e. the *prajñāpāramitā*, the perfection of wisdom) which Ārya Vimuktisena explicitly identifies with *dharmakāya*. And his final remark above also explicitly identifies the one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*), the entire subject matter of *AA* chapter 7, as the gnosis of a Buddha.

According to Ārya Vimuktisena, then, the single-moment comprehension is the non-dual gnosis of the emptiness of all phenomena, through which all phenomena are known at once. His discussion of *AA* chapter 7 is structured around the problem of how one moment of knowledge can know all things which are so vast and so different from each other. The answer, repeated again and again in different forms in the *PP sūtra* and Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, is that the perfection of wisdom can know all different things by knowing the one undifferentiated thing which they all share, their emptiness. This is expressed through the familiar *PP sūtra* expressions of the "non-

perception" of all dharmas and the comprehension of their "qualitylessness." It is expressed by Ārya Vimuktisena through the assertion that all is known in "one taste" (*ekarasa*). He makes this all the more explicit with the problem raised above at the end of his comments. A hypothetical objector says that śrāvaka āryas are said in *sūtra* to "attend to suffering *as suffering*, to attend to the source of suffering *as the source*," etc. He asks whether this doesn't contradict the explanation of one-moment comprehension (*ekakṣaṇa abhisambodha*), according to which all phenomenal things are known not through their different phenomenal natures (such as suffering), but through their "qualitylessness," through their ultimate nature of emptiness.

In chapter 5, section 3 above, we discussed the paradox in the Yogācāra tradition which lay implicit in the seminal Mahāyāna theory of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*): a Buddha was both unconditioned and conditioned, cognitively one with universal emptiness (an unconditioned state), but also spontaneously active in the conditioned world to help beings (a conditioned function). According to Yogācāra texts, the pervasiveness of a Buddha's activity was explained by the fact that his gnosis pervaded the entire universe. And his gnosis was understood to pervade the entire universe because it was understood to be cognitively conjoined with the one ultimate nature of everything in the universe, suchness, the *dharmadhātu*. The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* expressed this by saying that the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* pervades all things in "one taste" (*ekarasa*), just as space pervades all forms (see chapter 5, section 3).

Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks on gnosis follow this same pattern of thought. They point to a single, undifferentiated gnosis which knows all things in one taste through their undifferentiated emptiness. For Ārya Vimuktisena, as for the Yogācāras, the essential principle of enlightenment is a non-conceptual gnosis of suchness, from which all else is known and all other qualities follow. This, again, is utterly opposed to the notion, promulgated by the Abhidharmikas, that the essence of buddhahood is a differentiated collection of mental qualities, the undefiled dharmas. It also differs fundamentally from Haribhadra's postulation of a fourth *kāya* as a defining feature of buddhahood, the "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*" which is the collection of (conceptually differentiated) undefiled dharmas.

In line with both the expressions of the *PP sūtras* and the Yogācāra tradition, Ārya Vimuktisena finds the essence of enlightenment in a single undifferentiated principle, the non-dual gnosis of suchness, based upon which all else, including literal omniscience, follows. This becomes a natural basis for his acceptance of the three *kāya* theory of Yogācāra. For it is precisely the non-dual, undifferentiated realization of suchness which the Yogācāras identified as the *svābhāvikakāya*, the very essence of buddhahood. The *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* (as well as the collection of undefiled dharmas) were merely posited as phenomenal expressions of the *svābhāvikakāya* as it came under the conceptually constructed categories of sentient beings (see chapters 4 and 5 above).

In the last section of his comments, Ārya Vimuktisena identifies the "skill (*kuśala*) in the essential nature of all dharmas" as the *dharmakāya*.

The "skill in the essential nature of all dharmas" is a *PP sūtra* expression for *prajñāpāramitā*, the perfect wisdom of emptiness. As we noted in chapter 2 above, it is the suchness of all phenomena, and the non-dual realization of it (the *prajñāpāramitā*) which the *PP sūtras* identified as the defining feature of buddhahood, the *dharmakāya*. Similarly, as noted in chapters 4 and 5 above, the Yogācāra tradition identified purified suchness and non-conceptual gnosis as the essence of buddhahood, the *svābhāvikakāya* (also referred to as "*dharmakāya*"). Ārya Vimuktisena's identification of *dharmakāya* in his final comments above accords fully with both traditions.

By making these observations, it should be noted, we are not assigning Ārya Vimuktisena in any formal sense to the "Yogācāra school" of Indian Buddhism as opposed to the "Madhyamaka school." The Tibetan doxographers have generally characterized him as "Yogācāra Madhyamaka," but any such characterization on our part would require much further research. Rather, our observations above are intended to show how his acceptance of the three *kāya* buddhology from Yogācāra (in his comments on *AA* chapter 8) naturally follows from his gnoseology (as expressed in his comments on *AA* chapter 7). It is worth noting that Candrakīrti, a 7th century Mādhyamika philosopher, in the final chapter of his *Madhyamakāvatāra* on buddhahood, ascribes a "one-moment comprehension" to the Buddha through which he comprehends all things in one taste. The second verse of the chapter says: "Just as space is not divided by the divisions of containers [which enclose it], so there is no division in reality made by phenomena. Through rightly comprehending

with excellent knowledge that [all] is the same in one taste (*ekarasa*), you comprehend all things in one instant ("*khyod kyis skad cig gis ni shes bya thugs su chud.*" Poussin, Tibetan edition, p. 356). Like Ārya Vimuktisena, then, Candrakīrti, who is a Mādhyamika, ascribes a "one-moment comprehension" to the Buddha. And like Ārya Vimuktisena, Candrakīrti, in the rest of his *Madhyamakāvatāra*, proceeds to set forth three *kāyas*.

Ārya Vimuktisena's comments on other related sections of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* conform to his remarks above, and also provide insight into his buddhology. *AA* chapter 1, subtopic 2.3 is called "Instruction on the Three Jewels" ("*ratnatraya avavāda*"). Concerning the Buddha Jewel (*buddharatna*), Ārya Vimuktisena quotes the *PP sūtra* and then comments: "This teaches that the gnosis (*jñāna*) of the sameness of subject and object is Buddha."[18] This identifies the non-dual perfection of wisdom itself as Buddha. *AA* chapter 6, topic 7 is the"Recollection of the Buddha" (*Buddha anusmṛtiḥ*). Following the *PP sūtra*, Ārya Vimuktisena says that one recollects the Buddha precisely by *not* attending to his physical form, because form is without self-existence and unreal. Similarly, he says, one recollects the Buddha by not attending to his marks and signs, ten powers, etc. i.e. by not attending to any of the undefiled dharmas ascribed to him.[19] For Ārya Vimuktisena, to recollect

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[18] The *PPsūtra* quote appears in Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, section I.2.3, *Large Sutra*, p. 63. Ārya Vimuktisena's comment is *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 16-3-4 to 16-3- 5.

[19] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 91-1-4 to 91-2-4.

Buddha is to attend to the emptiness of all his qualities, to enter into the perfection of wisdom.

In chapter 4, section 2 above, we noted that the Yogācāras explicitly rejected the undefiled dharmas as the defining feature of buddhahood, considering them only a phenomenal description which did not capture its essence. They identified buddhahood's essence as the perfected gnosis of suchness, this being the "Essence Body," the *svābhāvikakāya*. Ārya Vimuktisena's gnoseology arrives at the same conclusions as the Yogācāras, and therefore lends to his buddhology the same structure of thought.

## 3. Ārya Vimuktisena's Tri-Kāya Analysis of Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8

Ārya Vimuktisena begins his comments on *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 by identifying its subject matter as "the *dharmakāya*" (meaning *dharmakāyaphalam*, resultant buddhahood, the *dharmakāya* in its inclusive sense). This, he says, is understood in its three aspects: the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Concerning *svābhāvikakāya*, he quotes *AA* vs. 8.1:

> The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects,
> The Essence Body (*svābhāvikakāya*) of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic. *AA* 8.1

We noted earlier (chapter 8, section 3 above) that the author of the *AA* was forced by his *PP sūtra* basis to define the *svābhāvikakāya* (of the Yogācāra tradition) in terms of the undefiled dharmas (as presented in *PP sūtra* passage VIII 5). This, then, is what Ārya Vimuktisena had to work with in *AA* vs. 8.1. He discusses the term "*svābhāvikakāya*," focussing on the etymological meaning of "*svabhāva*":

> Of the completely purified, undefiled all-dharmas, possessed of the *dharmadhātu*, the innate nature (*rang bzhin*, *prakṛti*), the essence (*ngo bo nyid*, *svabhāva*), is to be known as the Essence Body (*svābhāvikakāya*) of the Bhagavat, [where "essence"] means it is uncreated. It is well known in the world that an "essence" (*svabhāva*) is that which is not made. The supramundane path obtains the [Essence Body], it is not its creator.[20]

Here Ārya Vimuktisena specifically says the undefiled dharmas are "possessed of the *dharmadhātu* (universal emptiness)." It is unlikely that he means by this only that the Buddha dharmas are empty, for everything according to Mahāyāna metaphysics is empty, not just the Buddha dharmas. Rather, the expression "possessed of the *dharmadhātu*" most likely refers to the mind of the Buddha (designated in *AA* 8.1 in terms of the undefiled dharmas) in its capacity of non-dually cognizing the *dharmadhātu*. This follows naturally from his comments on "one-moment comprehension" in *AA* chapter 7 just above. The "Essence Body" (*svābhāvikakāya*), he says, is the innate nature, the very essence of

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[20] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-4-8 to 92-5-2.

the Buddha's undefiled mind which is possessed of (i.e. is a non-dual cognition of) the *dharmadhātu*. The term "essence" (*svabhāva*) in "Essence Body," he says, is used in its connotation of uncreatedness. In the common parlance of the world, the "essence" of water, for example, is its wetness. The heat of hot water or the cold of cold water must be added to the water, generated or created within it. But the wetness of water is not something which needs to be added to or created in the water. It is intrinsic to it. Similarly, the "Essence Body" is called "essence" because it is not something which can be created. It is *attained* by the supramundane paths of seeing, meditation, etc., but is not made by them.

Given the constraints of the peculiar expression of *AA* 8.1 (i.e. using the undefiled dharmas to define *svābhāvikakāya* for the first time in Indian Buddhist literature, see chapter 8 above), Ārya Vimuktisena does a remarkably good job of finding ways in his commentary to parallel the explanation of *svābhāvikakāya* traditional to Yogācāra texts. Earlier (chapter 5 above) we noted the various ways in which the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya* is characterized as unconditioned, permanent, and uncreated. As *tathatāviśuddhi* (purified suchness) it is unconditioned in its identification with suchness and in its permanent cessation of all obscurations. Further, suchness itself is never newly created. It has always been the case. What is attained through the yogic path is simply the non-dual awareness of it (which is the *svābhāvikakāya*). Another prominent concept in Yogācāra texts is that of the innate, luminous purity of mind (*cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*), which, at the attainment of enlightenment, is revealed, never created. The *svābhāvikakāya*, then, as the final removal

of all that had covered the innate purity of mind, is not a new creation, but the full revelation of what was always there. All such understandings of the permanence and uncreatedness of *svābhāvikakāya* are common throughout the Yogācāra texts which first delineated three *kāyas* (see chapter 5, section 3 for detailed discussion and references).[21] The parallels to Yogācāra commentators get quite specific. Ārya Vimuktisena's specific etymology for the "*svabhāva*" of "*svābhāvikakāya*," i.e. "*svabhāva*" (essence) is that which is not made ("*bcos ma ma yin pa*," "*akṛtima*"), is the precise expression used by the Yogācāra commentator Asvabhāva (ca. 6th century) in his etymological explanation of *svābhāvikakāya* as it is taught in *Msg* 10.1 (one of the principal early sources for three *kāya* theory).[22]

According to Ārya Vimuktisena, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* vss. 8.2-8.6 are a continuation of its explanation of *svābhāvikakāya*. He raises the hypothetical question:

> "What are those undefiled dharmas whose completely purified nature is the *dharmakāya*?"

He then quotes *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 as the *AA's* answer to that question:

> "The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the

21 Cf. gYag ston, *bLo gsal mgul rgyan*, fol. 1274b2-4.
22 *Msg upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 275a3.

> analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated.[23] *AA* 8.2-8.6

Note the specific form of Ārya Vimuktisena's hypothetical question: "What are those undefiled dharmas whose completely purified nature is the *dharmakāya*?" Prior to this, the only thing explicitly discussed in his commentary as the "purified nature" of the undefiled dharmas was the *svābhāvikakāya* of vs. 8.1. In his hypothetical question, Ārya Vimuktisena replaces the word "*svābhāvikakāya*" with the word "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6. By doing so, he already identifies the *svābhāvikakāya* of vs. 8.1 with the *dharmakāya* of vs. 8.6 right in his question. For him, both terms refer to the same thing, the first of the three *kāyas*, designated "*svābhāvikakāya*" in vs. 8.1 and "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6, (where "*dharmakāya*" carries its exclusive sense).

*AA* vss. 8.2-8.5 list the first nineteen types of undefiled dharma. Vs. 8.6 finishes that list and then declares that the *dharmakāya* is denominated through it:

> ... , the qualities unique to the Sage proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated.
> *AA* vs. 8.6

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23 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-5-2 to 92-5-6

After quoting the verses, Ārya Vimuktisena comments on the term "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6:

> Because the particle ["*tā*"] has been elided, it is the *dharmatākāya* [which is meant by the term "*dharmakāya*"]. Because otherwise, "*dharmakāya*" would be a *kāya* (body, collection) consisting of dharmas. That would negate the *svabhāva* (essence) [of *svābhāvikakāya*, Essence Body] and make of it an active thing (*caryārtha*). Thus there would be the fault of its being conditioned. As for calling it a "*kāya*," it is designated as such in accordance with the earlier state.[24]

This short passage requires considerable unpacking, so we will analyze it a portion at a time. The Sanskrit term "*kāya*" in its primary meaning is "body," from which derives the common secondary meaning "a collection" (since a body is a collection of limbs, etc.).[25] Ārya Vimuktisena says that the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6 is an abbreviation for "*dharmatākāya*," meaning the "*kāya* of *dharmatā*," the "*kāya* of

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24 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-5-6 to 92-5-7. The Tibetan reads: "*rkyen phyis pas chos nyid kyi sku zhes bya ste/ gzhan du chos rnams kyi sku ni chos kyi sku zhes bya ba yin pa'i phyir ngo bo nyid bdag par 'gyur ba* (sDe dge *ngo bo nyid bkag par 'gyur ba*) *dang/ sphyod pa'i don yin pa'i phyir 'dus byas su 'gyur ba'i nyes pa yod do/ de la sku zhes bjrod pa ni sngon gyi gnas skabs gyi rjes su 'brangs nas nye bar btags pa yin par bya'o//.*" "*Dag par 'gyur ba*" in the Peking edition is most probably a scribal error. I chose the sDe dge reading "*bkag par 'gyur ba*" in the translation above, because it makes sense (whereas the Peking reading does not), because "*bkag par 'gyur ba*" is what appears in Bhadanta Vimuktisena's commentary (also only available in Tibetan translation, Pk 5186, fol. 178-2-2), and because major Tibetan commentators such as gYag ston and Tsong kha pa also used that reading.

25 In Indian commentaries on the *AA* (those by Ārya Vimuktisena, Bhadanta Vimuktisena, Dharmamitra, Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta), the word "*kāya*" in "*dharmakāya*" is etymologized in one or more of three ways: *kāya* = *āśraya:* support, basis ("*dharmakāya*" = the support of all excellent qualities, *dharmas*); *kāya* = *śarira*: body ("*dharmakāya*" = body of *dharmatā*); or *kāya* = *saṃcaya:* collection or accumulation("*dharmakāya*" = collection of excellent qualities, *dharmas*). The term "*kāya*" in "*rūpakāya*," in both pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna texts, has generally meant "*śarīra*," "body."

ultimate reality." Otherwise, he says, if the term "*dharmakāya*" is understood to mean the *kāya* (the collection) of undefiled dharmas, the whole sense of the term "*svabhāva*" ("essence") in "*svābhāvikakāya*" ("Essence Body") would be lost. A number of points need to be made on this.

Just previously, Ārya Vimuktisena explained that the term "essence" in "Essence Body" means it is uncreated, that it is not something made. Then just above, he says that the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6, is not to be understood as a collection (*kāya*) of undefiled dharmas. The reason is that if the *dharmakāya* of vs. 8.6 were a collection of undefiled dharmas, it would be something composed from a collection of things. This would mean that it would be something made, something created through the accumulation of a collection (of undefiled dharmas). And this, he says, would negate the sense of "essence" in "Essence Body" as he defined it just previously: the Essence Body being called "essence" precisely because it is not made.

This set of remarks clearly shows that Ārya Vimuktisena understands the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 as another term for the "*svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1, an understanding which conforms both to the Sanskrit of the verses (see chapter 8 above) and the pattern of the Yogācāra tradition (in which *svābhāvikakāya* is equated with *dharmakāya* in its exclusive sense see chapter 4, section 5). Furthermore, the fact that his argument takes the form it does indicates that it never occurred to him that anyone would read vss. 8.1-8.6 to be teaching two distinct *kāyas*. If Ārya Vimuktisena had thought that anyone would read "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 as a

reference to a second *kāya* composed of undefiled dharmas (as Haribhadra did), he would have had to make an entirely different argument. His argument assumes the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 is a synonym for the "*svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1, such that if the former term is interpreted wrongly, it negates the very meaning of the latter term. We noted earlier (chapter 8, section 3) that Haribhadra's reading of the Sanskrit for *AA* chapter 8, particularly his reading of vss. 1.17 and vss. 8.1-8.6, considerably stretched the Sanskrit syntax to justify his interpretation of a fourth *kāya*. This is further corroborated by the fact that Ārya Vimuktisena, based on his reading of the Sanskrit, apparently never even considered that someone would read it as Haribhadra did.

Ārya Vimuktisena, then, is saying that the *dharmakāya* must not be interpreted as a collection ("*kāya*") of dharmas because this would negate the meaning of "*svābhāvikakāya*," for which "*dharmakāya*" is a synonym. But he must have been making this argument in opposition to somebody. Who was the opponent who understood "*dharmakāya*" to be the collection of undefiled dharmas? Presumably, it was the Abhidharmikas. As discussed in chapter 2 above, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* defined the Buddha in terms of the set of undefiled dharmas comprising his mind, referring to that set of dharmas as "*dharmakāya*" (see chapter 2 above). It was most probably the *Abhidharmikas* (such as the Sarvāstivādins associated with the *Mahāvibhāṣa*), who were the target of Ārya Vimuktisena's comment.

Ārya Vimuktisena, in his remarks above, mentions another problem with understanding the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as the collection of undefiled dharmas. Besides negating the sense of "essence" in "Essence

Body," it would also make of the Essence Body (the *svābhāvikakāya*) an "active thing" (*caryārtha*). This is a bit abstruse, since, as we saw in chapter 5 above, Yogācāra texts indicate the *svābhāvikakāya* manifests activity thoughout the entire universe of beings. But we also noted in that chapter that according to Yogācāra theory, the *svābhāvikakāya's* activity pervades the entire universe precisely because its activity is a manifestation of its gnosis of the unconditioned, the *dharmadhātu.*

According to the Yogācāra texts, the activity of a Buddha is available to every being because his gnosis pervades the whole universe of beings. And his gnosis pervades the entire universe because it is cognitively conjoined with suchness (*tathatā*), the *dharmadhātu*, the one ultimate nature (*dharmatā*) of everything in the universe (see chapter 5, section 3 above). This non-dual, non-conceptual gnosis of universal suchness is described in the Yogācāra texts as "unmoving." *MSA* vs. 9.51 says: "He [a Buddha] never moves from that place, and yet he carries it all out." "That place," according to the commentaries is the *dharmadhātu*, universal suchness. As we discussed in chapter 5, that non-conceptual gnosis of universal suchness itself is the essence of buddhahood, the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), and all the manifestations and activities of it are merely the appearance it takes under the conceptually constructed categories of sentient beings (see chapter 5 sections 3 and 4).

Given this background, which Ārya Vimuktisena (employing the Yogācāra terminology) was surely very much aware of, his remarks make sense. He says that if the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* were simply the collection of undefiled dharmas, not only would that *kāya* no longer be an

"essence" ("*svabhāva*") which is unmade, it would become an "active thing" (*caryārtha*). By this he probably means that *svābhāvikakāya* would no longer be the non-conceptual gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (which is "unmoving," fixed on the *dharmadhātu*), and *which knows all things through their suchness*. Rather, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as the collection of undefiled dharmas per se, would be a collection of many knowledges, knowledge of suchness together with many different knowledges of numerous phenomenal things. And the knowledges of phenomenal things are "moving" (*cala*) i.e. they necessarily begin and end with the appearance and disappearance of conditioned phenomena (see chapter 5, sections 3 and 4 for detailed discussion of "moving" and "unmoving" knowledge in Yogācāra texts). Phenomenal knowledge is "active," "engaged" (*caryā*) in the conditioned, phenomenal world, and hence conditioned by that world.

In other words, Ārya Vimuktisena is saying that the gnosis of the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is unmoving, fixed, inactive in that it knows all things through its knowledge of the unconditioned, the *dharmadhātu*. For this reason, he is saying, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* should not be identified as a collection of many knowledges (the undefiled dharmas), many of which are traditionally understood as impermanent cognitions of phenomenal things. For if the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* were such a collection, it would no longer be something which knows the world *through the unconditioned ultimate nature of the world*. Rather, like the cognitions of ordinary sentient beings, its knowledge would be based on the conditioned world itself. And this is not the proper understanding of

Buddha's gnosis as it is discussed in the Yogācāra tradition (chapter 5 above), in the *PP sūtra* itself (as quoted in Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary above), and in Ārya Vimuktisena's own commentary on the "one-moment comprehension" of *AA* chapter 7 (section 2 of this chapter above).

Ārya Vimuktisena, then, points out two problems entailed by identifying *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* with the collection of undefiled dharmas (the first problem being that the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* would no longer be an uncreated "essence," and the second problem being that it would become an "active thing"). And then he presents the underlying fault of both: the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* would be conditioned. As something made from a collection of things, and as something cognitively conditioned by the phenomenal world, it would be a conditioned thing. And as we noted in chapter 5 above, the Yogācāra tradition explicitly formulated *svābhāvikakāya* in relation to its model of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*) as a complete personal freedom from the conditions of *saṃsāra* (so as to be in the perfect position to assist others still trapped in *saṃsāra*, see chapter 5, esp. sections 1 and 3). Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks refer his readers back to the fundamental concept of *svābhāvikakāya* formulated in the Yogācāra tradition, according to which it must be unconditioned.[26]

26 gYag ston sangs rgyas dpal (ca. 1350-1414), the great Tibetan scholar, was one of the most preeminent and prolific Sa skya commentators on the *AA*. His comments on Ārya Vimuktisena regarding these issues are the most incisive I have seen: *Rin po che'i phreng ba blo gsal mgul rgyan*, fols. 2193a ff.

Let us return, now, to Ārya Vimuktisena's etymological analysis of the term "*dharmakāya*" from *AA* vs. 8.6. We will present again the portion of his comments which focuses specifically on the etymological meaning of the term "*dharmakāya*":

> Because the particle ["*tā*"] has been elided, it is the *dharmatākāya* [which is meant by the term "*dharmakāya*"]..... As for calling it a "*kāya*" ("body," "collection"), it is designated as such in accordance with the previous state.

Ārya Vimuktisena analyzes "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 etymologically in terms of its two elements: "*dharma*," and "*kāya*." The first element, "*dharma*," he says, is short for "*dharmatā*," the particle "*tā*" having been elided. That explicitly identifies the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 with the "*svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1 by equating "*svābhāvika*" with "*dharmatā*," the *dharmatā* (the ultimate nature of phenomena) being something which is unconditioned and uncreated (hence, also called "*svābhāvika*," the essential which is uncreated). This focusses on the suchness or *dharmatā* aspect of *svābhāvikakāya*.

Then he discusses the second element of "*dharmakāya*," the term "*kāya*." This, he says, is merely a designation made "in accordance with the earlier state" (*sngon gyi gnas skabs kyi rjes su 'brangs nas nye bar btags pa yin*). This again is a bit abstruse, and it is worth looking at how other commentators interpreted this remark. Bhadanta Vimuktisena, the next commentator after Ārya Vimuktisena, just repeats the remark, which doesn't help us. Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE), however, makes a

comment in one of his commentaries on the *AA* which appears to be based on Ārya Vimuktisena's remark. Referring to the collection of undefiled dharmas, Ratnākaraśānti says: "The differentiation of their characteristics, being done in accord with the causal state, is conventional. [Based on such reference to the causal state], such conceptual differentiation is permitted." (*Śuddhamatī*, Pk 5199, fol. 281-5-2: "*de dag mtshan nyid kyi dbye ba ni rgyu'i gnas skabs kyi rjes su 'brangs nas kun rdzob yin no/ spros pas mchog go* (sDe dge: *chog go*)." I read in accord with sDe dge). Taken together with the rest of his commentary, Ratnākaraśānti is saying that the realization of buddhahood per se, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, is utterly undifferentiated (being the non-dual gnosis of suchness). But, the collection of diverse undefiled dharmas has been ascribed to the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* from the phenomenal point-of-view.

According to Ratnākaraśānti, the collection of undefiled dharmas (pure mental qualities and knowledges) is ascribed to a Buddha phenomenally, based on the various mental qualities which the bodhisattva possessed prior to his attainment of buddhahood. "The causal state" Ratnākaraśānti refers to is the state of a bodhisattva who has not yet achieved buddhahood, a state in which there are many different knowledges and mental factors. Based on the diverse mental qualities of that causal state, we ascribe to the resultant state of buddhahood a set of various qualities (the undefiled dharmas). But this is done entirely from a phenomenal point-of-view. In fact, a Buddha's mind knows everything through its non-dual cognition of universal suchness, i.e. is cognitively

one with the *dharmadhātu*, and is therefore no longer divisible into a set of different knowledges which cognize different things at different times (see chapter 5, sections 3 and 4 above). The ascription of different undefiled dharmas (various different knowledges and mental qualities) to Buddha, then, is merely a conceptual construction of the not-yet-enlightened. While permitted as a lesser, phenomenal description of buddhahood, it is not, strictly speaking, accurate. Buddhahood, as it is actually realized by a Buddha, is the undifferentiated *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya.*

Ratnākaraśānti's perspective follows from the original Yogācāra conception of *svābhāvikakāya.* We will look at his comments further in chapter 11 below. But, for now, with reference to Ārya Vimuktisena's remark above, Ratnākaraśānti's comment does shed light.[27] Ārya Vimuktisena said that the term "*kāya*" in "*dharmakāya*" is merely a designation made "in accordance with the earlier state." Ratnākaraśānti said the differentiation of undefiled dharmas was done conventionally in accord with the "causal state," i.e. the state of a bodhisattva before enlightenment. What Ārya Vimuktisena probably meant, then, is that the term "*kāya*" in "*dharmakāya*" refers to the mind of a Buddha which *used to be* a collection of distinct dharmas (prior to buddhahood) but is now undifferentiated. The term "*kāya*" (in "*dharmakāya*") carries the meaning of "collection" (or "body" in the sense of collection) referring to the

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[27] It was Tsong kha pa's synoptic commentary on the *AA* which pointed out to me the connection between Ratnākaraśānti's remarks above and Ārya Vimuktisena's thought (*Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 240a2-5).

collection of undefiled dharmas. But it does not imply that a Buddha's gnosis is divided up or differentiated in any way. Rather, the term "*kāya*" is designated to a Buddha's mind based on the collection of gnoses that he had as a bodhisattva prior to his attainment of buddhahood, in the "earlier state." According to Ārya Vimuktisena, then, the term "*kāya*" in "*dharmakāya*," refers figuratively to the gnosis of the Buddha as a "body" or a "collection" based on the collection of gnoses that he used to have in his earlier state as a bodhisattva.

This means that Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks above constitute an etymological explanation of *dharmakāya* (of vs. 8.6) which declares it to consist of two essential principles: 1. *dharmatā* (= *tathatā*, *śūnyatā*, ultimate reality) and 2. *jñāna* (non-conceptual gnosis, the non-dual cognition of ultimate reality, which is designated "*kāya*," "collection" or "body" from a phenomenal point-of-view). His remarks also clearly identify the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 with the "*svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1. As we discussed at some length earlier (chapter 4 above), the two fundamental principles of *svābhāvikakāya* formulated in the Yogācāra tradition are suchness (*tathatā*, *dharmatā*, etc.) and non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*). Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks on *AA* chapter 8 vss. 1-6 fully conform to this Yogācāra pattern. And his discussion of "one-moment comprehension" in his comments on *AA* chapter 7 further support our understanding (see section 2 of this chapter). For Ārya Vimuktisena does indeed characterize the one-moment comprehension of the Buddha as the knowing of all things at once through the "one taste" of their ultimate nature, the *dharmatā*. For him, as for the early Yogācāra

tradition, a Buddha's gnosis is one, undifferentiated knowledge of the *dharmadhātu* through which he knows all (not a collection of many knowledges which add up to a knowledge of all).

There is further specific correspondence between Ārya Vimuktisena's etymological comments on *dharmakāya* and the Yogācāra tradition. The etymology which Ārya Vimuktisena presents for "*dharmakāya*," in which the term "*dharma*" is understood as an abbreviation for "*dharmatā*," was a popular mode of explanation in the Yogācāra tradition. This etymology was specifically used by Yogācāra commentators to demonstrate that the term "*dharmakāya*" in its exclusive sense was a synonym for "*svābhāvikakāya*," since "*dharmatā*" and "*svabhāva*" both connote the unconditioned, ultimate nature of things. Asvabhāva, the 6th century Yogācāra scholar, presents this "*dharma*"-"*dharmatā*" etymology for "*dharmakāya*" in order to explain why *Msg* 10.1 identifies *svābhāvikakāya* (immediately upon introducing it) as "*dharmakāya*." And, in fact, Asvabhāva's comments on this etymology are so close to Ārya Vimuktisena's comments above that it appears that one of the commentators modelled his remarks on the other (*Msg Upanibandhana*, sDe dge ri, fol. 275a3). The *Kāyatrayavṛtti* by Jñānacandra (ca. late 6th century, a Yogācāra disciple of Dharmapāla's), also presents the "*dharmatā*" etymology for "*dharmakāya*" early in its exposition (Pk 5291, fol. 122-1-1). The same etymology appears in Sthiramati's commentary on the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, vs. 4.14 (Yamaguchi, p. 191), a fundamental Yogācāra text.

Taken as a whole, then, Ārya Vimuktisena's comments on *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* (on *AA* vss. 1-6) reflect Yogācāra patterns of thought and also serve as a continuation of his remarks on "one-moment comprehension," the gnoseology of the *PP sūtra.* Although the undefiled dharmas, according to him, are not to be identified with *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, they are, never the less, a valid description of it from a phenomenal point-of-view (i.e. from our point-of-view, not the Buddha's). And the *AA*, because of its text basis in the Large *PP sūtra*, does describe the *svābhāvikakāya* in relation to the undefiled dharmas. Therefore, Ārya Vimuktisena continues his commentary by explaining each of the twenty-one types of undefiled dharma that are listed in *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6, occasionally referring the reader to earlier parts of his commentary where some are discussed, and drawing from Abhidharma descriptions for others.[28]

The last of the undefiled dharmas is *sarvākārajñatā*, the total omniscience of a Buddha. Ārya Vimuktisena's comments on this are revealing (cf. Conze's *Large Sutra* pp. 596 and 575). The Sanskrit term "*sarvākārajñatā*" literally means "knowledge of all aspects." Ārya Vimuktisena presents the opinions of scholars who differ on the meaning of the term, defining it differently according to how they interpret the

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28 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-5-7 to 96-2-1. Tsong kha pa (*Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 233b6 to 239a5), points out the portions of *AA* commentaries where some of the 21 undefiled *dharmas* were discussed prior to chapter 8 (principally under the first topic of *AA* chapter 4, "ākāra"). He also shows the relation between Haribhadra's commentary on several of the undefiled *dharmas* (which parallels Ārya Vimuktisena's comments) and their descriptions in the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya.*

semantic component "*ākāra*," "aspect." According to some scholars, he says, "the knowledge of all aspects" (*sarvākārajñatā*) is the knowledge perceiving the Four Noble Truths (*catvāri āryasatyāni*), which includes knowledge of all sixteen of their aspects (impermanence, suffering, selflessness, etc.). According to others, it is the gnosis (*jñāna*) which realizes the ultimate aspects of phenomena: their lack of self-existence, their non-origination, non-cessation, primordial peacefulness, etc. According to others, he says, the "knowledge of all aspects" refers to Buddha's capacity, based on his gnosis, to fulfill the highest aspirations of sentient beings [in all their aspects], like the wish-fulfilling jewel of Indian legend. According to others, it is called "knowledge of all aspects" because it is the gnosis which has eliminated the obscurations in all their aspects (emotional and cognitive obscurations and their propensities).

Ārya Vimuktisena says that all these interpretations of "*sarvākārajñatā*" ("knowledge of all aspects") have merit, but he likes best the interpretation put forth by an Ācaryā Bhadrapāla ("slob dpon bzang skyong"). I am not familiar with this scholar and have not seen reference to him before. But Ārya Vimuktisena quotes Bhadrapāla as follows:

> "Because it is the very quintessence (*snying po*, *sāra*) included within the ten aspects of epistemological objects: basal consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), etc., it is called 'the knowledge of all aspects' (*sarvākārajñatā*)."

Ārya Vimuktisena then comments:

> "This is the very best [interpretation of *sarvākārajñatā*], because it [*sarvākārajñatā*] perceives the perfected (*pariniṣpanna*)."[29]

I am not sure what the "ten aspects" are which Bhadrapāla refers to. He names only one: *ālayavijñāna*, one of the eight types of consciousness distinctively set forth in the Yogācāra school. The term "*ālayavijñāna*" is so distinctively Yogācāran, that it is likely Bhadrapāla was an ācaryā of that school. And his comments above, if accurately quoted by Ārya Vimuktisena, may indicate that he understood *sarvākārajñatā* primarily as the Buddha's *cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*, the primordial, quintessential purity of the mind at the stage of enlightenment. The theory of such an innate, quintessential purity, as we have seen, is fundamental to the Yogācāra tradition (see chapter 5, section 3 above).

Ārya Vimuktisena's only comment expressing his personal opinon is the one at the very end. He likes Bhadrapāla's interpretation best, he says, because the knowledge of all aspects "perceives the perfected." The term "the perfected" (*pariniṣpanna*) sometimes appears in the Large *PP sūtra* as a synonym for *śūnyatā, tathatā*, *bhūtakoṭi*, etc., i.e. as another term for the ultimate nature of things. But probably its most popular usage in the period when Ārya Vimuktisena wrote (ca. early 6th century) was Yogācāran. "*Pariniṣpanna*" designated one of the three ontological characteristics of phenomena in the fundamental Yogācāra *śāstras* (the

[29] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 96-1-2 to 96-1-7.

*MSA*, *Msg*, *MAV*, *DDV*, *Trimsika*, etc.). In Yogācāra theory, the three characteristics are the imaginary (*parikalpita*), the dependent (*paratantra*), and the perfected (*pariniṣpanna*). The "imaginary" is the unreal duality conceptually constructed by sentient beings. The "dependent" is the actual content of conditioned cognition, which exists, but is structured in an illusory (dualistic) way. The "perfected" (*pariniṣpanna*) refers to the emptiness of the duality imagined within the dependent, and also refers to the gnosis which realizes that emptiness (see chapter 4, section 6 above for a more detailed explanation of these terms).

It is worth noting, then, that Ārya Vimuktisena's favorite interpretation for *sarvākārajñatā* was apparently made by a Yogācāra ācaryā (Bhadrapāla), and that Ārya Vimuktisena's only personal comment on *sarvākārajñatā* describes it in characteristically Yogācāran terminology: "*pariniṣpanna*." Furthermore, his understanding of *sarvākārajñatā* as "the perception of *pariniṣpanna*" makes of it (in accord with Yogācāra gnoseology) a non-dual, undifferentiated gnosis of suchness. Again, then, Ārya Vimuktisena understands Buddha's omniscience ("knowledge of all aspects") primarily as a non-dual knowledge of the one (ultimate) nature which all things ("all aspects") share. That Ārya Vimuktisena draws upon Yogācāra scholars of his time and uses Yogācāra terminology here should not surprise us, since his entire commentary on *AA* 8 understands it to be teaching the three *kāyas* which were formulated in the Yogācāra tradition.

Following the comments quoted above, Ārya Vimuktisena then quotes the portion of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* which teaches *sarvākārajñatā*. It

is noteworthy that this is the first time in his comments on *AA* chapter 8 that he quotes the *PP sūtra*. In the rest of his commentary on all the chapters prior to chapter 8, he had quoted the *PP sūtra* soon after introducing every single one of the *AA's* topics (for all 66 of the *AA* topics prior to *svābhāvikakāya*). In chapter 8, rather than quoting the *sūtra* upon introducing *svābhāvikakāya* (the first topic of the chapter), he waits until his discussion of *sarvākārajñatā* (which is not a principal topic but a sub-topic of *svābhāvikakāya*). And importantly, the portion of the *PP sūtra* which he quotes as the textual basis for *sarvākārajñatā* is in passage VIII 5.2 (in Conze's numbering system), the passage in which the Bhagavat explicates the list of undefiled dharmas (one of which is *sarvākārajñatā*).[30] As we noted in chapter 7 above, *rP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 were written after Ārya Vimuktisena's time. The only *PP* textual basis which Ārya Vimuktisena found for the *AA's* teaching of *svābhāvikakāya* (in *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6) was the listing of undefiled dharmas in *PP* passage VIII 5.2. (see chapter 7, section 2.B.3 above for a full discussion of this).

Ārya Vimuktisena's comments on *AA* vss. 8.7-8.11 are brief and do not add anything new to our analysis.[31] He understands these verses to be a continuation of the explanation of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* which was begun in vss. 8.1-8.6. I refer the reader to the translation and

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30 Ārya Vimuktisena quotes the *PP* text basis for *sarvākārajñatā* at Pk 5185, fol. 96-1-6. His quote corresponds to part of *PP* passage 8.5.2 in the unrevised 25,000 *PP sūtra*, Pk 731, fol. 143-2-2; revised 25,000 *PP sūtra* (*rP*), Pk 5188, fol. 11-5-1; 18,000 *PP sūtra*, Pk 732, fol. 151; and 100,000 *PP sūtra*, Pk 730, fol. 230-2-2.

31 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 94-5-1 ff., 94-5-3 ff., 96-2-1 to 96-2-5.

explanation of vss. 8.7-8.11 presented in chapter 6 above. Ārya Vimuktisena's brief comments accord with what was said there.

Ārya Vimuktisena next quotes *AA* vs. 8.12, the verse which first describes the *sāmbhogikakāya*, the second topic of *AA* chapter 8. His own comments characterize the *sāmbhogikakāya* as the form in which the Bhagavat (Buddha) shares the enjoyment of the Mahāyāna dharma with the retinue of bodhisattvas. The content of his comments parallels the Yogācāra definitions of *sāmbhogikakāya* (in the *MSA*, *Msg*, *Buddhabhūmivyākhyāna*, etc.; see chapter 4, section 4 and chapter 5, section 2 above), while his style of expression parallels the style of the *PP sūtras*.[32] Evidently recognizing the *AA's* 8th chapter for what it was, a mapping of Yogācāra *kāyas* onto the *PP sūtra*, his comments are framed in accord with both textual traditions.

After his own brief explanation of *sāmbhogikakāya*, he spends many folios detailing the thirty-two marks and eighty signs ascribed to it in *AA* vss. 8.13-8.32. He does so in conjunction with quotes and paraphrases from the 25,000 *PP sūtra*. All his quotes and paraphrases on the marks and signs come from *PP* passage VIII 5.2, the section which lists the marks and signs right after the list of undefiled dharmas.[33]

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32 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 96-2-5 to 96-2-6: "*sku des sangs rgyas bchom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa' chen pos chen po la zhugs pa rnams dang thabs cig tu kha na ma tho ba med pa theg pa chen po'i chos kyi longs spyod kyi dga' ba dang bde ba so sor myong bar mdzad pa yin no/.*"

33 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 96-2-8 to 98-4-6. Ārya Vimuktisena's quotes and paraphrases are all drawn from *PP* passage 8.5.2: Conze, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* section 8.5.2; *Gilgit Manuscript*, pp. 46-53; *Large Sutra*, pp. 580-587.

Thus, in Ārya Vimuktisena's discussion of *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya* (the first two topics of *AA* chapter 8), all *PP sūtra* quotes and paraphrases are taken from *PP* passage VIII 5.2 (the passage which lists the undefiled dharmas and the marks and signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*). At the end of his remarks on *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya*, Ārya Vimuktisena explicitly identifies passage VIII 5.2 as the *PP sūtra* basis for the *AA's* teaching of those two *kāyas*. He says:

> As for the teaching of these two [*kāyas*], they are taught in the section of the [*PP*] *sūtra* which teaches the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activity, [in the section on] the method of gathering disciples which is the giving of supramundane dharma. Therefore they were not taught earlier [in the *sūtra*].[34]

*PP* passage VIII 5.2 teaches the four methods of gathering disciples, the first of which is giving. It lists the undefiled dharmas and marks and signs as the giving of supramundane dharma. Ārya Vimuktisena's remark above specifically identifies this very passage as the sole textual basis for the *AA's* teaching of *svābhāvikakāya* and *sāmbhogikakāya* (for further discussion of this, see chapter 7, section 2.B.3 above).

Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary on *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40, concerning the *nairmāṇikakāya* and its activity, was discussed in the latter part of chapter 6 above (the reader may want to refer to this in conjunction with the remarks below). Ārya Vimuktisena reads verse 8.33, the *AA's* brief

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[34] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, fol. 98-4-6 to 98-4-7.

explanation of *nairmāṇikakāya*, as gramatically and logically connected to the first half of verse 8.34, which concerns the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activity:

> The Body of the Sage in its Emanation (*nairmāṇikakāya*) is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted until the end of existence. Likewise, it is agreed, its activity is uninterrupted to the end of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*): .... *AA* 8.33-8.34a

Ārya Vimuktisena defines the *nairmāṇikakāya* as the emanations (*nirmāṇāḥ*) manif-sted throughout the universe by the resultant *dharmakāya* (buddhahood) to carry out its activities until the end of *saṃsāra* (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 98-5-1 to 98-5-2). He believes that *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40 as a whole teach the activity of the resultant *dharmakāya* (buddhahood) by means of its manifestation as *nairmāṇikakāya*. *AA* vss. 8.33-8.34a, in his view, describe the *nairmāṇikakāya* in general as the agent of enlightened activity, while vss. 8.34b-8.40 detail the twenty-seven different types of activity which the *nairmāṇikakāya* (as the agent of resultant *dharmakāya*) carries out (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 98-5-1 to 98-5-7; for translation of *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40, see chapter 6 above).

Ārya Vimuktisena quotes *PP sūtra* passage VIII 4 as the textual basis for *AA* vs. 8.33-8.34a concerning the *nairmāṇikakāya* with its activity in general. And he quotes extensively from *PP sūtra* passage VIII 5 as the textual basis for the detailed description of the *nairmāṇikakāya's* activities in *AA* vss. 8.34b to 8.40.[35] Ārya Vimuktisena understands the *AA's*

[35] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 98-5-3 to 98-5-5, 99-1-4 to 100-3-4.

author to have taken the activities described in *PP* passage VIII 5 (done by limitless bodhisattvas) as activities of the Buddha himself, carried out by his emanations (*nirmāṇāḥ*), i.e. by his *nairmāṇikakāya*. As noted in chapter 8 above, *AA* vs. 8.40b says: "This is regarded as the twenty-sevenfold activity of the *dharmakāya*." Ārya Vimuktisena understands the term "*dharmakāya*" here to refer to the *dharmakāyaphalam*, the resultant state of buddhahood, whose activities are done through its limitless manifestations as *nairmāṇikakāya*.[36]

According to Ārya Vimuktisena, then, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* used the term "*dharmakāya*" in its inclusive sense (as inclusive of all *kāyas*) in *AA* vss. 8.40 (as well as in vs. 1.17 and vs. 9.2, see chapter 6 above).[37] It

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36 Ārya Vimuktisena (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 98-4-7) identifies *PP* passage 8.5 (which describes extensive activities done by *bodhisattvas* throughout the realms of beings) as "the portion of *sūtra* which teaches the activity of the *nairmāṇikakāya*." At fols. 98-5-1 to 98-5-2, he defines the *nairmāṇikakāya* as the emanations (*nirmāṇāḥ*) into all realms of beings by which the resultant *dharmakāya* (buddhahood) carries out its activities. At fol. 98-5-7 he says *AA* vss. 34-40 are taught to answer the question: "How many kinds of activity has the [resultant] *dharmakāya*?" In sum, he interprets *AA* vss. 33-40 together as a teaching on the activities of the resultant *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāya* in the inclusive sense) carried out by means of its *nairmāṇikakāya*.

37 At *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, fols. 100-3-5 to 100-3-6, Ārya Vimuktisena explicitly identifies the "*dharmakāya*" of *AA* vs. 1.17 with the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.40, both as resultant *dharmakāya* (inclusive of all three *kāyas*): "*ngo bo nyid longs spyod bcas dang/ de bzhin gzhan pa sprul pa ni* [*AA* vs. 1.17a]*/ zhes bya ba rnam pa gsum dang/ chos kyi sku yi phrin las 'di/ rnam pa nyi shu bdun du bzhed* [*AA* vs. 8.40b] */ ces bstan pa yin pa de bshad par rig par bya'o/.*" At fol. 100-5-4, he identifies the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.40 (associated with the twenty-seven types of activity) as the "*dharmakāyaphalam*" of vs. 9.2 with its activity: "*yang tams cad mkhyen pa nyid gsum ni yul yin no/ mngon par rtogs pa bzhi rgyu yin no/ chos kyi sku rnam pa gsum ni de'i 'bras bu yin la sems chan gyi don rnam pa nyi shu rtsa bdun ni de 'phrin las yin no....*" In short, according to Ārya Vimuktisena, the term "*dharmakāya*" in *AA* vss. 1.17, 8.40 and 9.2 is used in its inclusive sense as *dharmakāyaphalam*, and the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6 is used in its exclusive sense as a synonym for *svābhāvikakāya*. See chapter 6 above for translation and discussion of *AA* vss. 1.17, 8.40 and 9.2, and refer to the earlier part of this chapter for Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation of vs. 8.6.

used the term "*dharmakāya*" in its exclusive sense (as a synonym for "*svābhāvikakāya*" alone) only in *AA* vs. 8.6 (discussed earlier in this chapter).

In chapter 5, section 5 above, we discussed the fact that the Yogācāra tradition identified the *nairmāṇikakāya* with the extensive activity of buddhahood in many texts. This identification was apparently well-known to Ārya Vimuktisena. He clearly assumed that the *AA's* author constructed *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40 in accord with it. In his view vss. 8.33-8.40 comprised an extended discussion of the *nairmāṇikakāya* as the agent of the enlightened activity (on this, see also the analysis of vss. 8.33-8.40 in chapter 8, section 5 above).

In sum, Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary reads *AA* chapter 8 as a direct mapping of the three Yogācāra *kāyas* onto the content of specific passages of the Large *PP sūtra* (passages VIII 4 and VIII 5 in Conze's numbering system). According to Ārya Vimuktisena, *AA* vs. 8.1 links the Yogācāran *svābhāvikakāya* with the undefiled dharmas listed in *PP* passage VIII 5.2. The undefiled dharmas are taken as a phenomenal description of the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*. *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 then detail the *PP* content at greater length, listing each of the undefiled dharmas. *AA* vs. 8.12 links the Yogācāran *sāmbhogikakāya* with the marks and signs listed in *PP* passage VIII 5.2. Then *AA* vss. 8.13-8.32 detail the content of that *PP* passage, listing all the marks and signs and some of their causes. *AA* vss. 8.33-8.34a link the Yogācāran *nairmāṇikakāya* with the extensive activities mentioned in *PP* passage VIII 4 and described at length in *PP* passage VIII 5. Then vss. 8.34b-

8.40 detail the content of *PP* passage VIII 5, listing all twenty-seven types of activity described there.

Our own finding (in chapters 7 and 8 above) that the *AA's* 8th chapter represents a mapping of Yogācāra categories onto *PP sūtra* content (and is therefore a three *kāya* text) was based on numerous textual and historical- critical considerations. To reach our conclusion, we had to use historical-critical methods to project ourselves back into the period when the *AA* was composed. Ārya Vimuktisena lived at a time much closer to that when the *AA* was written. He reached the same conclusions we did; and he probably did so because he was living in a time when both of the textual traditions which structured the *AA's* 8th chapter were still very much alive. For a scholar such Ārya Vimuktisena, who was immersed in the Yogācāra and *PP* buddhological expressions of his time, it probably seemed self-evident that the purpose of *AA* 8 was to draw an explicit correlation between those very expressions.

# CHAPTER X

# HARIBHADRA'S INTERPRETATION OF ABHISAMAYĀLAṂKĀRA CHAPTER 8 AS A FOUR KĀYA TREATISE: THE APPLICATION OF 8TH CENTURY BUDDHIST LOGIC AND MĀDHYAMIKA ANALYSIS TO BUDDHAHOOD

## 1. Introduction: The Lens through which Haribhadra Saw Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8

At the conclusion of the last chapter, we noted that Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early 6th century) read *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 from the perspective of someone steeped in both of the textual traditions from which it was constructed: the Yogācāra *śāstras* (which first formalized the theory of three *kāyas*) and the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. Approximately two and a half centuries later, Haribhadra (ca. late 8th century), who was to become the most famous and influential of all *Prajñāpāramitā* commentators, saw the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* through a very different lens.

The quarter of a millenium which separated Haribhadra from Ārya Vimuktisena was a period of tremendous development in Indian Buddhist philosophy. Dignāga (ca. 440-520), a Yogācāran, established a logical

and epistemological tradition in Buddhism which was further developed by Dharmakīrti (ca. 650). The methods of this logico-epistemological school were taken up by Buddhist philosophers of all schools, particularly the Madhyamaka, in later Indian Buddhism. Furthermore, the Yogācāra/Vijñaptimātra analysis of consciousness, karmic cause and effect, and the conceptual construction of duality became increasingly influential throughout Indian Buddhism over these centuries.

Śāntarakṣita, one of the most important Mādhyamika philosophers of the 8th century, was instrumental in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. He wrote several commentaries on Dharmakīrti's logic and epistemology and was heavily influenced by Yogācāra thought. He established what came to be known as the "Yogācāra-Madhyamaka" tradition of Buddhism (in Tibetan doxography, *"rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma"*), in which he formalized a special syncresis of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka philosophy. He adopted the Yogācāra analysis according to which the subject-object duality within cognition was understood to be a mere conceptual construction (on this, see chapter 4, section 6). In so doing, however, he only accepted the Yogācāra denial of the externality of objects as a description of the phenomenal level of reality, conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*), not as a description of the ultimate level of reality, ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*).

According to Śāntarakṣita, the Yogācāra analysis of non-duality was not to be taken as an analysis of ultimate truth per se, because it did not go deep enough (i.e. it still permitted a possible adherence to the substantiality of consciousness itself, whereas Mādhyamikas such as

Śāntarakṣita denied the substantial existence of everything including consciousness). Rather, according to Śāntarakṣita, the Yogācāra theory of non-duality formed a useful first step toward the graded realization of ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*) which was to be understood according to Madhyamaka principles. His explanation of ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*), then, was a Madhyamaka analysis, following in the tradition of Nāgārjuna, which analytically sought the apparent independent self-existence (*svabhāva*) of entities and found only their utter lack of such self-existence, their emptiness (*śūnyatā*, also referred to as "*dharmatā*," "thingness," the ultimate nature of things). Whereas Yogācāras had identified *pariniṣpanna* (the perfected nature, the non-dual gnosis of suchness) as ultimate truth (*MAV* 3.10-3.11, 3.13 *bhāṣya*), and later Yogācāra scholars such as Sthiramati had affirmed the independent self-existence of consciousness itself,[1] Śāntarakṣita, as a thoroughgoing Mādhyamika, denied the independent self-existence of all things. According to Śāntarakṣita, every thing, including consciousness (and even non-dual gnosis itself), was found upon ultimate analysis to be empty of self-existence.[2]

Haribhadra, who lived at the end of the 8th century, is reported in the Tibetan traditions to have been a disciple of Śāntarakṣita.[3] Haribhadra's commentaries indicate that he followed the principles of Yogācāra-

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[1] *MAV* 1.1 *Ṭīkā*, Yamaguchi, p. 10: "*abhūtaparikalpo 'sti': svabhāvata iti vākyaśeṣaḥ.*"
[2] Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 90-92; Kajiyama, "Later Mādhyamikas on Epistemology and Meditation," pp. 114-143 on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*.
[3] Ruegg, *Lit. of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 88-89, 102.

Madhyamaka which Śāntarakṣita had developed.[4] He was an accomplished scholar of the logico-epistemological school which had flowered in the centuries prior to him, was thoroughly familiar with Abhidharma, and was a rigorous proponent of Madhyamaka thought.[5] He wrote two particularly famous commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* which exerted a profound influence on the history of all further such commentary in India and Tibet. His *Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā Prajñāpāramitāvyākhyā* (also referred to simply as "*Āloka*") related the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* to the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* in 8,000 verses. This was the first time such a relationship had been established, for, as we noted in chapter 7 above, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was composed based on the *PP sūtra* in 25,000 verses, and was commented on only in relation to that version of the *sūtra* up until Haribhadra's time. Haribhadra's *Abhisamayālaṃkāraśāstravṛtti* (also known as the "*Sphuṭārthā*") served as a summary of his *Āloka*, containing its comments on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* without including its quotes from the *PP sūtra*.

Appearing about a quarter of a millenium after Ārya Vimuktisena, Haribhadra's commentaries owed much to the developments in Buddhist

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4 ibid., p. 93. Ruegg notes that Haribhadra quotes from Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* in his *Āloka*. Haribhadra also appears to paraphrase a comment made by Jñānagarbha in the *Satyadvayavibhaṅga* concerning the gnosis of a Buddha (*Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 531, ls. 25 ff.). Jñānagarbha is reported to have been a teacher of Śāntarakṣita's (Ruegg, *Lit. of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 69, 89).

5 In his *Āloka*, Haribhadra quoted from the works of Dignāga and his commentators of the logico-epistemological school, Vasubandhu, the *Abhidharmakośa* and the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, as well as from the works of Nāgārjuna, Aryadeva, and other Mādhyamikas (see Wogihara's Index to the *Āloka*, pp. 11-14).

thought which had developed since Ārya Vimuktisena's time. He was especially influenced by the logico-epistemological tradition and the developments in Madhyamaka thought described above. His interpretation of *AA* chaper 8 was conditioned by all of these factors.

In chapters 4 and 5 above we found that the Yogācāra tradition understood buddhahood primarily as an ultimate realization which was extrapolated from its theory of yogic praxis and gnoseology. According to Yogācāra texts such as the *MSA* and *Msg*, the path to buddhahood focussed on the gradual perfection of the non-conceptual gnosis of suchness, conjoined with the practises of the perfections, through which all cognitive obstructions were eventually removed until the full enlightenment of a Buddha was attained. At the attainment of buddhahood, all cognitive obstructions that had hidden suchness were utterly removed, leaving just purifed suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) and the non-conceptual gnosis of it (*nirvikalpajñāna*). Because, according to Yogācāra philosophy, it was precisely the epistemological distinction between subject and object that was removed by non-conceptual gnosis, a Buddha was not, strictly speaking, a "knower" of ultimate reality, for the conceptual construction of "knower" and "known" was not made in his non-dual cognition. Therefore, the very essence of buddhahood, the perfected non-dual gnosis of suchness, was designated through terms such as "*tathatāviśuddhi*," "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*," "*anāsravadhātu*," "*nirvikalpajñāna*," etc. which connoted a non-dual knowledge-reality beyond the ordinary epistemological categories of subject and object. This non-dual knowledge-reality was identified as the *svābhāvikakāya*

(Essence Body) because it was taken as the very essence (*svabhāva*) of enlightenment. All other qualities ascribed to a Buddha, such as the collection of undefiled dharmas (his mental qualities) and his various bodies of form (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*) were conventionally designated to buddhahood by non-Buddhas from their phenomenal point-of-view. But a Buddha's actual realization, his very essence, was just the *svābhāvikakāya* (see chapers 4 and 5 above).

Furthermore, in the Yogācāra tradition, in line with the theory of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*), the *svābhāvikakāya* was characterized as unconditioned and permanent, and yet somehow able to give rise to pervasive, spontaneous activity throughout the universe. Its activity, manifesting within the conditioned world, was conditioned (see chapter 5, section 3 above). The unconditioned part of buddhahood was understood to be its non-dual realization of unchanging ultimate reality and its permanent elimination of moral and cognitive obstructions. The conditioned part of buddhahood was its compassionate activity in a conditioned world. But the precise mechanism whereby buddhahood could reconcile its unconditioned nature with its conditioned manifestation and activity in the world was left unspecified. For the Yogācāras, the fact that the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* could include and reconcile within itself two apparently contradictory properties was further evidence of its greatness and profundity (see chapter 5, section 3 above).

The early Mādhyamikas such as Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva delineated no more than the two *kāyas* found in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. But some

Mādhyamikas prior to Haribhadra's time had obviously been effected by the basic Yogācāra pattern of buddhological thought, finding its theory of three Buddha *kāyas* congenial to Madhyamaka discussions of buddhahood. Candrakīrti, a seventh century Mādhyamika delineated three *kāyas* in his *Madhyamakāvatāra*, and his conception of *dharmakāya* in particular (the first of his three *kāyas*) appears to have owed much to the Yogācāra conception of *svābhāvikakāya*.[6] Also important to later Indian Buddhism was a short treatise called the *Trikāyastotra* (Praise to the Three Kāyas), whose authorship is a bit controversial, but which gives the appearance of a Madhyamaka text.[7]

Nevertheless, by the late 8th century, the Yogācāra tri-*kāya* buddhology (centered as it was on *svābhāvikakāya*) was apparently becoming worrisome to some Mādhyamikas. Haribhadra's commentaries on *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8 departed from the Yogācāra tri-*kāya*

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[6] The *buddhabhūmi* chapter of the *Madhyamakāvatāra* describes *dharmakāya* and its gnosis in terms very similar to those of Ārya Vimuktisena (chapter 9, section 1 above) and of Yogācāra texts (chapters 4 and 5 above). Like the Yogācāra texts discussed earlier, Candrakīrti's *buddhabhūmi* chapter centers its three *kāya* theory on the non-dual gnosis of ultimate reality which comprises the first *kāya* (the *dharmakāya*). According to Candrakīrti, all phenomena share the ultimate nature of "thatness" (*tattvam*). Therefore, a Buddha cognizes all phenomena through his perfected, non-dual cognition of their thatness; he knows all things "in one taste" (*ekarasa*). See Poussin's Tibetan edition, pp. 356 ff. Candrakīrti's gnoseology and tri-*kāya* buddhology will be further discussed in section 3 of this chapter below.

[7] Ruegg, *Lit. of the Madhyamaka School*, p. 56, note 163. The *Trikāyastotra* is ascribed to Nāgārjuna by late Indian scholars like Dharmamitra (ca. 800 CE, *Prasphuṭapadā*, Pk 5194, fol. 109-2-3) and Abhayākaragupta (ca. 1100 CE, *Munimatālaṃkāra*, sDe dge A, fol. 217b2). But such ascription comes many centuries after Nāgārjuna lived. Since Nāgārjuna mentions only two *kāyas* in other of his texts, and since the development of the three *kāya* theory in Yogācāra circles seems well established, it is likely that someone else wrote the *Trikāyastotra*. Tāranātha ascribes the text to a Nāgāhvaya (Ruegg, ibid., p. 56). In any case, it uses no specifically Yogācāra terminology and its description of the first *kāya*, *dharmakāya*, seems distinctly Mādhyamika.

buddhology in several important ways. The most obvious way, of course, was that he espoused a theory of four *kāyas* rather than three. But the rationale behind his theory appears to have been based on certain logical and Madhyamaka concerns of his period, concerns which ran counter to the tri-*kāya* structure which had originated in a context of Yogācāra theory and praxis. Those concerns may have developed gradually, gaining increasing importance within some Madhyamaka circles up to the time of Haribhadra, and finally finding explicit expression in Haribhadra's new interpretation of *AA* Chapter 8. Two problems generated by Yogācāra buddhology appear to have been of special concern to Mādhyamikas such as Haribhadra:

1) The Yogācāra identification of buddhahood's essence (the non-dual gnosis of suchness as *svābhāvikakāya*, Essence Body) seemed to identify it as an ultimate or independent existent. Mādhyamikas deny the ultimate or independent existence of everything, including buddhahood. The only "essence of buddhahood" which would be findable under Madhyamaka analysis is emptiness itself. According to Madhyamaka philosophy, then, it is only the emptiness of buddhahood that can be accurately designated "*svābhāvikakāya*" ("Essence Body"). Anything else would constitute an implicit absolutism.

2) The fundamental Mahāyāna theory of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*) as it found expression in Yogācāra buddhology created a paradox which Haribhadra sought to resolve. The Yogācāra emphasis on non-duality made it impossible, within the realization of buddhahood, to distinguish the gnosis of suchness from suchness itself.

The *svābhāvikakāya*, as a non-dual epistemological identification with suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*) was generally described as an unconditioned and unchanging entity. But, paradoxically, in line with the theory of non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, that unconditioned entity was also supposed to be the source of pervasive activity in the conditioned world (chapter 5, section 3 above). The Yogācāras had taken this paradoxical nature of buddhahood as a further indication of its exaltedness. But for Haribhadra, such a paradox was not an exalted quality of buddhahood but merely the product of poor human logic. He therefore sought to make sense of the concept of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* by sorting the unconditioned from the conditioned elements of buddhahood, and by identifying the conditioned source of a Buddha's activity within his gnostic realization.

Haribhadra's formulation of four *kāyas* in interpreting *AA* chapter 8 appears, in part, to have constituted his response as a Mādhyamika philosopher to these two problems, problems which were created by the Yogācāra buddhological theory of three *kāyas* as it centered on the *svābhāvikakāya*. Each of these two problems, then, needs some further explanation.

1) The problem of the Yogācāran svābhāvikakāya itself not withstanding Madhyamaka analysis: The Yogācāra theory of *pariniṣpanna* in general identified both *śūnyatā* (emptiness, *avikāra pariniṣpanna*) and the non-dual gnosis of it (*samyagjnāna*, *aviparyāsa pariniṣpanna*) with ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*, see *Madhyāntavibhāga* and *bhāṣya*, 3.10-3.13). For the Yogācāras, ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya)* was precisely the emptiness of subject-object

duality as it revealed itself to awareness. Yogācāra philosophy, then, denied the independent existence of subject-object duality, since such duality was merely a conceptual construction. But it did not deny the independent existence of awareness itself, particularly the pure awareness of the lack of duality (the non-dual gnosis of suchness) which was *pariniṣpanna*. With reference to their buddhology, the Yogācāras identified that non-dual gnosis taken to its perfection as the very essence of buddhahood, i.e. the *svābhāvikakāya*. But this granted a kind of ontological ultimacy to Buddha's gnosis which, from a strict Madhyamaka perspective, bordered on a kind of absolutism.

From a Madhyamaka perspective, ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*) is not something found to be independently or ultimately existent. Rather, upon subjecting any phenomenon whatsoever to ultimate analysis, all that is found is its emptiness of any such independent or ultimate status. Upon ultimate analysis, the only essence (*svabhāva*) a Mādhyamika finds in any phenomenon, is its emptiness of self-existence. This is because every thing, which enters or ever could enter our experience, exists in a nexus of linguistic categories, causes and conditions, and/or in relation to the composition of its parts in space or time. Nothing within our experience stands apart from such causal and linguistic nexi. Therefore, nothing is independently established apart from them; nothing is self-existent. Buddhahood, like any other entity, is empty of self-existence. Therefore, the only ultimate essence (*svabhāva*) a thoroughgoing Mādhyamika can find in buddhahood is precisely its emptiness of ultimacy, its emptiness of self-existence (*svabhāvaśūnyatā*). Haribhadra, operating from such a

Madhyamaka perspective, identifies the very essence of buddhahood, the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), as the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of buddhahood itself. And because the *rūpakāyas* are merely the forms under which the Buddha's gnosis manifests under the conceptual categories of sentient beings, the very essence of buddhahood is to be identified particularly as the emptiness of the Buddha's gnosis, his mind. According to Madhyamaka metaphysics, all beings and all beings' minds without exception are empty of self-existence. The *svābhāvikakāya* is distinguished by the fact that it is the emptiness of the only kind of mind which has been utterly purified of all moral and cognitive obstructions. It is the Buddha's mind alone which is so totally purified, and it is therefore the emptiness of his mind alone which is identified as *svābhāvikakāya.*

2) <u>Non-abiding Nirvāṇa in Yogācāra Buddhology.</u> <u>The problem of the Yogācāra svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya being unconditioned by nature while also being the source of conditioned activity</u>: By applying the Madhyamaka analysis of the two truths to buddhahood as above, Haribhadra could also address the second problem in the Yogācāra pattern of buddhology: the paradox of the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* being both unconditioned and active within conditions. If the emptiness of buddhahood (the ultimate truth, *paramārtha satya*) is distinguished from the phenomenal nature of buddhahood (the conventional truth, *saṃvṛti satya*), the paradox of buddhahood being both unconditioned and conditioned can be made to disappear. By logically distinguishing the emptiness and purity of Buddha's gnosis from the gnosis itself (as a conventional, functional, and impermanent existent), Haribhadra thereby

logically separated the unconditioned and conditioned aspects of buddhahood. The emptiness of self-existence of all things is not dependent on conditions and is therefore an unconditioned and permanent aspect of every phenomenon, including buddhahood. The purity of Buddha's gnosis represents his permanent cessation of every kind of moral and cognitive obstruction. Such a cessation is an unconditioned and permanent property of a Buddha's mind. The emptiness and purity of Buddha's mind, then, identified together as *svābhāvikakāya*, correspond precisely to the unconditioned side of buddhahood. The Buddha's gnosis itself, however, understood as a form of awareness (which, like all forms of awareness are understood by Haribhadra to be conditioned and changing moment to moment) comprises the conditioned side of buddhahood. Haribhadra, understanding Buddha's gnosis as a conditioned entity, logically separated it from the unconditioned aspect of buddhahood which is *svābhāvikakāya*. The conditioned gnosis itself he identified as a second Buddha *kāya*: the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis. It was this second *kāya* which he could then identify as the conditioned source within buddhahood for a Buddha's activity in the conditioned world.

In the centuries prior to Haribhadra's time, the basic Yogācāra pattern of buddhology, (which asserted three *kāyas* centered on *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as the essence of buddhahood), became widely accepted, not only by Yogācāras but also by Mādhyamikas such as Candrakīrti and the author of the *Trikāyastotra* (more will be said about Candrakīrti's buddhology in this and following chapters). Ārya

Vimuktisena, who accepted the Yogācāra formulation of three *kāyas*, was also considered a Mādhyamika (Haribhadra calls him such in the introduction to his *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975, pp. 2-3). The Yogācāra tri-*kāya* structure became the common inheritance of all major schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

But discomfort with the Yogācāra formulation may have developed gradually in certain Mādhyamika quarters for the reasons given above. Haribhadra's teacher Vairocana (to whom he pays respect in his *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā*) may have been part of a movement within the Mādhyamika school to reevaluate the tri-*kāya* buddhology that Mādhyamikas had inherited from the Yogācārins.[8] Historically, then, Haribhadra's interpretation of the 8th chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* in the late 8th century appears to represent the first textual expression of a Mādhyamika concern to correct perceived problems which Yogācāra buddhology had created.

In his method of interpreting *AA* 8, then, Haribhadra fundamentally altered the prevailing earlier methods of buddhological inquiry. As noted previously, the Yogācāra tradition understood buddhahood primarily as an ultimate realization which was to be extrapolated (in broad terms) from that tradition's theory of yogic praxis and gnoseology. Buddhahood, in its essence (as *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*), then, was often described as knowable only through personal realization, because it had passed beyond

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[8] Dharmamitra, a commentator on Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* who probably wrote close to Haribhadra's time, said that some Indian scholars of his time ascribed Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* to Haribhadra's teacher Vairocana. This will be discussed in chapter 11, sec. 2 below.

the epistemological categories of ordinary beings (chapter 5, section 2 above). The epistemological exclusivity of buddhahood was taken quite seriously by the Yogācāras. Because of it, the apparent contradiction of Buddha's non-dual gnosis of the unconditioned *dharmadhātu* serving as basis for pervasive activity in a conditioned world was left a paradox, even an exalted paradox, of buddhahood (chapter 5, section 3). Haribhadra, in setting out to solve the perceived problems in the Yogācāra scheme (mentioned above), applied a very different method in his analysis of buddhahood. He evidently felt that it was the Yogācāra scheme itself that had engendered the problems discussed above, and that those problems could be resolved by subjecting buddhahood to the same sort of logical analysis which any other phenomenon was subject to in the Madhyamaka philosophy of his time.

In short, whereas the Yogācāra tradition posited *svābhāvikakāya* as an extrapolation of its yogic praxis and non-dual gnoseology, Haribhadra posited it as the result of logical, Madhyamaka analysis. For Haribhadra, *svābhāvikakāya* was to be logically distinguished from all other aspects of buddhahood in accord with a Madhyamaka analysis of the two truths and with the logic of the unconditioned and the conditioned. In the Yogācāra tradition, "*svābhāvikakāya*" referred to a yogic realization beyond the logico-epistemological categories and precise inference of sentient beings. For Haribhadra, "*svābhāvikakāya*" referred to an aspect of buddhahood which was distinguishable precisely through logical analysis and inference. In Haribhadra's view, buddhahood was not only accessible to human logic, but the unclarity and confusion he saw in earlier accounts of

buddhahood derived from a timidity toward the proper application of logical analysis. Of course, the centuries between the composition of the principal Yogācāra texts (discussed in chapters 4 and 5 above) and the appearance of Haribhadra were precisely the centuries which had seen the meteoric rise of Buddhist logic and the increasing predominance of the Madhyamaka school on the Indian scene.

We noted above (chapter 6) that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra's* unique project of mapping Yogācāra categories onto the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* created a number of ambiguities in its Sanskrit verses. We found that these ambiguities were resolvable through a careful reading of the Sanskrit, contextualized by historical-critical and comparative textual analyses (see chapters 7 and 8 above). But if a scholar's primary concern in his interpretation of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* was not philological and historical accuracy, but a reformulation of buddhological theory which would correct perceived problems created by the Yogācāras, the *AA's* ambiguities would serve not as a source of consternation but as a blessing: the ambiguities could serve as a basis for important corrective work. The *AA* provided Haribhadra with an ambiguous enough text in versified Sanskrit to make a new formulation of buddhological theory (a theory of four *kāyas* in non-Tantric Buddhism) while, at the same time, providing the opportunity of ascribing his theory to one of the most sacred and authoritative texts of his time, thereby avoiding the criticism that he had made it all up himself. It is in Haribhadra's *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā* where we find the first ascription of the *AA's* authorship to Maitreya, a *bodhisattva-Buddha* figure of the highest traditional authority.

## 2. A Translation of the Portions of Haribhadra's Sphuṭārthā Relevant to his Presentation of Four Kāyas

Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* on *AA* chapter 8 constitutes a complete treatise on the Buddha *kāyas* which is set forth without being structured around quotations from the *PP sūtra* (his *Āloka* is structured around quotations from the 8,000 verse *PP sūtra*). As such, the *Sphuṭārthā* clearly and straightforwardly presents Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8, without the *Āloka's* slightly more awkward structuring. Below is translated Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* on all the verses of *AA* chapter 8 relevant to our understanding of his formulation of four *kāyas* (I have left out his individual explanations of each of the 32 marks, 80 signs and 27 types of activity, which are lengthy and not specifically relevant to our discussion). What follows is an English translation of Haribhadra's commentary on *AA* chapter 8, vss 8.1-8.12, vs. 8.33, his prologue to vss. 8.34-40, and his concluding comment. The translation is made from Amano's 1983 Sanskrit edition of *Sphuṭārthā* chapter 8, in conjunction with his 1975 edition, and with the corresponding passages from Wogihara's Sanskrit edition of the *Āloka*. In making the English translation, I also checked the Sanskrit editions against the Tibetan translations from the Tibetan Tripitika (Amano, 1975).

The translation as a whole is first presented below, and then, in the next section of this chapter, the same translation will be presented again passage by passage with my own comments. Because the next section of this chapter contains short passages of translation separated by lengthy

annotations, the whole translation is presented here first for ease of reference.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p.3, fols. 24b1-24b3]

In the next moment after the completion of the one-moment comprehension, there occurs the realization of the *dharmakāya*. That [realization of *dharmakāya*] has four aspects, by its division into the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), etc. First the *svābhāvikakāya* is declared:

"The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects,
The *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body) of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic." *AA* vs. 8.1

The mindfulnesses, etc. [i.e. the undefiled dharmas] consisting of supramundane gnosis, are undefiled. Through the adventitiousness of their stains (*malānām āgantukatvena*), and through their being the nature (*rūpatvād*) of the *dharmadhātu* [universal emptiness], they are possessed of purity in all respects and are possessed of the character of freedom from natural [existence] (*prakṛti vivikti lakṣaṇam*). Their innate nature (*prakṛti*), their essence (*svabhāva*), i.e. their nature of non-arising is this, [the *svābhāvikakāya*] of the Sage, the Buddha, the Bhagavat. It is obtained by the supramundane path; it is not created. Thus, with this sense of being uncreated, it is the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), which is obtained through the realization that consciousness and all phenomena are like illusions.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p.3, fols. 24b3-24b4]

The remaining three *kāyas* (bodies), appearing by [conformance to] true [worldly] convention (*tathyasaṃvṛtyā*), are ultimately (*parmārthataḥ*) the nature of *dharmatā*. Differentiated in accordance with [different] mentalities, they are established by being the cognitive objects for [three different

types of person]: Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and *śrāvakas*, etc. In order to indicate this, the tradition (*nyāya*) says:

"For the non-separateness of what is discerned from the discernment is accepted."

which means that even though it [the *svābhāvikakāya*] is not separate from them [the conventional *kāyas*], it is posited as separate.

Sphuṭārthā - [Amano, 1983, pp. 3-4, fols. 24b4-25a4]

Having thus explained the first *kāya*, the second [*kāya*] is declared, the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis free from discursive conceptualization (*dharmakāyaṃ niṣprapañcajñānātmakam*), whose character is the undefiled [dharmas] such as the mindfulnesses, etc.:

"'The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience': thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated." *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6

[These verses set forth:] (1) the factors which foster enlightenment beginning with the mindfulnesses and ending with the eight-fold path; (2) the measureless thoughts: love, etc. which are the four heavenly abodes, as earlier [explained]; (3) the eight liberations: two in which [the yogi], himself possessing form or not possessing form, beholds external forms; one in which [the yogi] manifests with his form the liberation of beauty, and fully obtaining it, abides [in it]; the four [formless] meditative attainments of space, consciousness, nothingness, and neither discrimination nor nondiscrimination; and the [attainment] of the cessation of discrimination and feeling; (4) the nine meditative states: the four concentrations of the form realm, the four formless meditative states, and the attainment of cessation; (5) the ten types of meditative totality: earth, water, fire, air, blue,

yellow, red, white, consciousness, and space; (6) the eight kinds of bases of overpowering: four in which a person, [first] with the cognition that he himself has form, [then] with the cognition that he himself has no form, focusses upon external objects, [first] those of small size, [then] those of large size, and overpowering them, knows them; and four in which a person, just with the cognition that he himself has no form, overpowering blue, yellow, red and white, perceives them; (7) the meditative power which suppresses passions by eradicating the continuum of passions and delusions contained in others' mental continua; (8) the knowledge resulting from resolve, utterly free of all signs, all attachment eliminated, which continues for as long as *saṃsāra* and liberation exist, through its fulfillment of the resolution to remove the doubts [of all beings]; (9) the six supernatural knowledges and (10) the four analytical knowledges which were explained earlier; (11) the four purities: complete purity with respect to one's basis, objects, mind and gnosis; (12) the ten sovereignties: dominion over life, mind, requisites, action, birth, [whatever one is] interested in, [whatever one] has resolved, supernatural power, gnosis, and truth; (13) the ten powers and (14) the four forms of fearlessness explained earlier; (15) the three ways in which [Buddha] has nothing to hide: the *tathāgata* has completely pure conduct of [his] body, speech, and mind; he has no wrong conduct which he would consider concealing, out of fear that others may discover it; (16) the threefold mindful equanimity: toward those who like listening to his teaching, those who like not to listen, and those [which include] both, [he is] free of attachment, aversion and both; equanimitous only he abides, possessed of mindfulness; (17) the nature of never forgetting, whose characteristic is that one never disregards when it is time to carry out the benefit of others; (18) the complete destruction of all negative propensities by having destroyed the seeds, the predispositions, of the moral and cognitive obstructions (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇa*); (19) the great compassion for living beings which is the resolute intention to help all beings; (20) the eighteen qualities unique to Buddha; (21) total omniscience (*sarvākārajñatā*).

Included in the word "and" [in the expression "and total omniscience" of *AA* vs. 8.6] is the knowledge of the path (*mārgajñatā*) and so forth, which were explained earlier.

According to some, the *dharmakāya* is explained as all of those [undefiled] dharmas, the factors fostering enlightenment,

etc., consisting of gnosis free from discursive conceptualization, utterly transformed through basal transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*).

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 5, fols. 25a4-a6]

But, others explain that: "The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects, the *svābhāvikakāya* of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic" (*AA* vs. 8.1), literally means that, it being agreed upon that the supramundane undefiled dharmas [are the Buddha's gnosis], the *svābhāvikakāya* is what possesses their innate nature (*prakṛti*), non-arisingness (*anutpādatā*), as its property. And it [the *svābhāvikakāya*] is also the *dharmatākāya*, this being indicated by [the concluding word of vs. 8.6]:"*dharmakāya*," through the ellision of the particle that indicates abstract nouns ("-*tā*"). Then they [raise the hypothetical] question: "What are those undefiled dharmas, the innate nature of which the *dharma[tā]kāya* has as its property?" And they set forth [*AA*] verses [8.2-8.6] [as answer to this]: "The factors which foster enlightenment,..." etc.

Others [reply that] [Buddha's] non-dual primary consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaittāḥ*), transformed through the transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), are what carry out [his] activities of teaching the dharma, etc. by generating appearances which have specific purposes in conformance to the conventional [perspective] of yogi [disciples]. How, according to those [whose assertion is immediately above], are those [primary consciousnesses and mental factors] which must surely be accepted, included [within the *kāyas*]?

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p.5, fols. 25a6-25a7]

Some, [criticizing] the four *kāya* explanation, [quote *AA* vs. 1.17, the table of contents of *AA* chapter 8]: "*svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, and *nairmāṇika* as well, *dharmakāya*, with activity, proclaimed as four-fold." *AA* vs. 1.17

In [this] verse, [they claim,] since the word "*dharmakāya*" is not said immediately after the word "*svābhāvika*," there are only three *kāyas*.

But others [reply] that, on the strength of the intention just demonstrated, for felicity in the construction of the verse, and for the sake of associating activity with the gnosis alone, it was stated thusly. Therefore [the *AA*] is consistent with all the statements in other quarters (*pradeśāntara*)[9] that the *kāyas* are four-fold.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, pp. 5-7, fols. 25a8-25b6]

That being so, in order to show the superiority of a Buddha's meditative power freeing from passions (*araṇāsamādhi*) over that of the disciples (*śrāvakas*), etc., the following verse (*AA* vs. 8.7) is said:

"A disciple's meditative power freeing from passions is the avoidance of men's passions [arising] from seeing [that disciple]. The Victor's [Buddha's] meditative power freeing from passions is for cutting off the stream of their passions in towns, etc."

*AA* vs. 8.7

Having thought, "May there be no arising of passions in anyone because of seeing me," the arising of passions in people is avoided. [This is] the meditative power of the disciples (*śrāvakas*), etc. which frees from passions. But the *tathāgatas*' meditative power freeing from passions is such that there is the eradication of the continua of passions of all the sentient beings in towns, etc.

In order to explain the superiority of a Buddha's gnosis [resulting from] resolve (*praṇidhijñāna*) over that of the disciples, etc., the following verse is said:

"It is accepted that the Buddha gnosis [resulting from] resolve is automatic, unattached, unobstructed, forever operative, and answers all questions." *AA* vs. 8.8

Through its freedom from signs (*nimitta*), it operates of its own accord. Because it is free from adherence to things, it is free from attachment to forms, etc. Because it has abandoned the

9 Amano, 1983 has "*praśāntara*." Amano 1975 (p. 270), Wogihara (p.916) and Tibetan have "*pradeśāntara*" ("*phyogs gzhan*"), which makes more sense.

moral and cognitive obstructions (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇa*) together with their propensities, it is unobstructed with reference to all objects of knowledge. Because it remains for as long as cyclic existence lasts (*saṃsāra*), it is forever operative. Because it has obtained the analytical knowledges, it provides answers to the questions. Such is accepted for the *tathāgata's* gnosis [resulting from] resolve. Since that of the disciples, etc. is just the reverse, it is not like [a Buddha's].

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 6, fols. 25b2-25b4]

If [Buddha] always abides as *dharmakāya* with a nature of great compassion, why isn't the welfare [of beings] always being accomplished? In order to respond to this, the following verse is said:
"When the cause has reached fruition, whenever and for whomever there is benefit to be accomplished, then and there he appears." *AA* vs. 8.9

With Buddha, etc. as a basis,[10] through meeting one's spiritual guide, and so forth, the cause (i.e. the seed, the root of

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10 Amano, 1983, fol. 25b3 has: "*buddhādyālambanena.*" Amano, 1975, p. 272 has: "*buddhādyālambane.*" Tibetan puts the expression in the genitive and links it to "*hetu*": "*sangs rgyas la sogs pa la dmigs pa'i rgyu,*" "the cause for perceiving Buddha, etc." Dharmamitra's subcommentary on the *Sphuṭārthā*, the *Prasphuṭapadā*, does not comment on this verse. But Dharmakīrtiśrī's subcommentary, the *Durbodhāloka*, glosses the expression as: "*sangs rgyas la dmigs pa la sogs pa 'tshang rgya ba nyid kyi rgyu.*" Dharmakīrtiśrī (ca. 1000 CE) explains Haribhadra's meaning as follows: "By making contact with one's guru and upādhyāya, then based upon their teaching, one visualizes Buddha, etc., i.e. [sitting] in the vajrāsana posture and so forth, one visualizes the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, etc. That comprises the cause. Then by training on the paths, etc., it becomes mature, and the cause for the manifestation of [Buddha] ,who bestows the [final] result of enlightenment, is obtained" (*Durbodhāloka*, Pk 5192, fols. 49-3-7 to 49-4-1). Dharmakīrtiśrī appears to identify the "cause" referred to in *AA* vs. 8.9 (and in Haribhadra's comments) primarily as the refuge practise in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism which involves visualizing Buddhas, bodhisattvas, etc. (perhaps the visualization of the *tshogs zhing*). And the result of this, he says, is both the future manifestation of Buddha to the yogi, and the yogi's own attainment of enlightenment as Buddha through that. Dharmakīrtiśrī (of Suvarṇadvīpa) is reputedly the famous Indonesian guru of Atiśa (Ruegg, *Literature of Madhyamaka School*, p. 110), who passed on to Atiśa his special practises for the development of compassion and *bodhicitta.* It is intriguing to see Dharmakīrtiśrī make apparent reference in his commentary to practises which he himself may have passed on to Tibet through his famous disciple.

virtue planted in the past) reaches maturity. Then, any time the teaching of dharma, etc. would have long term benefit for any such being, in order to benefit that being, the Bhagavat, by the fulfilment of his previous resolutions, accomplishes beneficial activity through a manifestation appropriate for that [very being at that very time]. But although he always abides nearby in the manner of a wish-fulfilling gem, [if] due to one's own karmic faults, the causes [for his manifestation to oneself] are incomplete, then [Buddha], who bestows their result, does not manifest. That is the purport [of the verse].

How is that so? An example is given by the following verse: "But even when the god of rain pours down rain, an infertile seed does not sprout. So even when Buddhas arise, one who is unfit does not obtain the blessedness." *AA* vs. 8.10

Even when the king of gods is showering down rain, a seed such as a sesame which, being rotten, is infertile, does not sprout forth. Likewise, even when Buddhas arise who are expert at fulfilling all wishes, one without [karmic] fortune does not obtain the blessedness, i.e. the hearing of the holy dharma, etc.

How can the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) be called "pervasive" (*vyāpī*) and "permanent" (*nitya*) when it exists within the mental continuum of each yogi [Buddha] individually, and is produced (*utpadyamānaḥ*) moment by moment? [An answer is provided] by the following verse: "Because of such extensiveness of activity, Buddha is declared to be pervasive. And because of his inexhaustibility (*akṣayatvāt*), he is called permanent." *AA* vs. 8.11

In the manner just indicated [in verses 8.8-8.10 above], Buddha is called "pervasive"(*vyāpī*) because of the extensiveness of the activity which he carries out through his universal manifestations, and he is called "permanent" (*nitya*) because the Bhagavat has no diminution, his continuity remaining for as long as cyclic existence lasts.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 7, fol. 25b7]

Having thus presented the second *kāya* [i.e. the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*], the third one is taught, the *sāmbhogikakāya* (Shared Enjoyment Body) which blazes with the marks and signs, and which is by nature a body of form:

"This, having the character of the thirty-two marks and eighty signs, is considered [to be] the Body of the Sage in its Shared Enjoyment (*sāmbhogikakāya*), because of its enjoyment of the great vehicle (*mahāyāna*)." *AA* vs. 8.12

Because it partakes in the pleasure and happiness of sharing the enjoyment of the utterly impeccable Mahāyāna dharma in company with the great bodhisattvas who have entered into the ten stages (*bhūmis*), it is the Shared Enjoyment Body (*sāmbhogikakāya*) of the Buddha, the Bhagavat, whose nature is the thirty-two marks and eighty signs.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, pp. 12-13, fols. 27b3-27b7]

Having thus presented the third *kāya* [i.e. the *sāmbhogikakāya*], the fourth one is taught, the *nairmāṇikakāya* (Emanation Body), which [appears] in common to all ordinary beings:

"The *nairmāṇikakāya* of the Sage is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world]." *AA* vs. 8.33

That which, through forms such as Śākyamuni's, carries out the desired benefit of beings in all realms of the universe equally for as long as cyclic existence lasts, is the *nairmāṇikakāya* of the the Buddha, the Bhagavat. It is uninterrupted because of its continuousness.

Thus have the three [conventional] *kāyas* been presented, which are produced from the force of meditational practise, whose [ultimate] nature is the *svābhāvikakāya*, and which, by being [different] cognitive objects for Buddhas, [bodhisattvas], [*śrāvakas*], etc., are designated in dependence on [Buddha's] gnosis (*jñānam*), etc. Conventionally the gnosis alone carries out the activities through its generation of manifestations as *sāmbhogikakāya*, etc. Thus, the activities for trainees through [those] manifestations, which occur based upon the power of that [gnosis], belong to the *dharmakāya* [consisting of gnosis]. With this sense, it is said:

"Likewise, it is agreed, its activity (*karma*) is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: the activity which pacifies the

states of rebirth, which establishes [beings] in the fourfold means of collecting [disciples]," *AA* vs. 8.34
"which establishes (*niveśanaṃ*) them in the comprehension of affliction and purification, in the proper nature of the welfare of beings, and in the six perfections," *AA* vs. 8.35
"which establishes them in the Buddha path, in the emptiness of intrinsic nature, in non-duality, in conventional symbolization (*saṃkete*), in non-perception, and in the maturing of embodied beings," *AA* vs. 8.36
"which establishes them in the bodhisattva path, in preventing adherence [to things], in the attainment of enlightenment (*bodhi*), in the purity of a Buddha's realm, in definite destiny," *AA* vs. 8.37
"which establishes them in the welfare of limitless beings, in the excellence of attending upon and devoting onesself to the Buddhas, in the limbs of enlightenment, in the non-wastefulness of deeds (*karma*), and in the vision of the truths," *AA* vs. 8.38
"which establishes them in the elimination of false views, in the method of [ascertaining] the baselessness of those [views], in purification and its accompanying accumulation, in the knowledge of non-distinction between conditioned and unconditioned," *AA* vs. 8.39
"and which establishes them [finally] in *nirvāṇa*.
This is regarded as the twenty-sevenfold activity of the *dharmakāya*." *AA* vs. 8.40

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 14, fol. 28a4]

Thus, it is agreed, like the *dharmakāya*, its twenty-sevenfold activity [operates] for as long as cyclic existence lasts.

## 3. A Commentary on the Sphuṭārthā's Presentation of Four Kāyas

Here we present again the translation from the *Sphuṭārthā* above, but this time with our own comments. Haribhadra was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant commentators in Indian Buddhist history. He can communicate so much meaning in so very few words, that even just one of his phrases or expressions sometimes necessitates an extensive explanation on our part.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p.3, fols. 24b1-24b3]

> In the next moment after the completion of the one-moment comprehension, there occurs the realization of the *dharmakāya*. That [realization of *dharmakāya*] has four aspects, by its division into the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), etc. First the *svābhāvikakāya* is declared:
>
> "The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects,
> The *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body) of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic." *AA* vs. 8.1
>
> The four mindfulnesses, etc. [i.e. the undefiled dharmas] consisting of supramundane gnosis, are undefiled. Through the adventitiousness of their stains (*malānām āgantukatvena*), and through their being the nature (*rūpatvād*) of the *dharmadhātu* [universal emptiness], they are possessed of purity in all respects and are possessed of the character of freedom from natural [existence] (*prakṛti vivikti lakṣaṇam*). Their innate nature (*prakṛti*), their essence (*svabhāva*), i.e. their nature of non-arising is this, [the *svābhāvikakāya*] of the Sage, the Buddha, the Bhagavat. It is obtained by the supramundane path; it is not created. Thus, with this sense of being uncreated, it is the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), which is obtained through the realization that consciousness and all phenomena are like illusions.

This passage identifies the *svābhāvikakāya* as the "non-arising nature" of the undefiled dharmas which have achieved purity in all respects. The formulation may appear peculiar at first, but it has special significance. First, Haribhadra explicitly avoids identifying *svābhāvikakāya* with the Buddha's gnosis per se in any sense. Rather he explicitly identifies the *svābhāvikakāya* with the "non-arising nature" of the gnosis, i.e. its ultimate, unconditioned nature, its emptiness of independent or natural (*prakṛti*) existence. Thus, his primary formulation of *svābhāvikakāya* identifies it as the emptiness of the Buddha's mind. The undefiled dharmas being Buddha's mental qualities, the *svābhāvikakāya* is the emptiness of those dharmas.

At the same time, however, Haribhadra especially emphasizes the purity of the Buddha's mind. The undefiled dharmas are said to be utterly pure in two senses. The first sense refers to their purity from "adventitious stain." This means that all the moral and cognitive obstructions which polluted the mind prior to enlightenment have been completely removed by the completion of the Mahāyāna path. Those obstructions, those "stains," were adventitious to the mind because they were removed from it. Their removal, then, constitutes a change in an accidental feature of the mind, not a change in its very essence.

The second sense of "purity" refers to what Haribhadra identifies as the very essence of the mind. That is the mind's primordial freedom from natural existence (*prakṛti vivikti lakṣaṇaṃ*) because of its being, in essence, the *dharmadhātu* (emptiness). In other words, Haribhadra identifies the very essence of the mind with its emptiness (its freedom

from natural existence, i.e. its freedom from independent or self-existence) which is also called the "*dharmadhātu*." The expression "*vivikta*," in Sanskrit connotes "separation from," "freedom from," "isolation from," and as a secondary connotation, it also refers to purity (purity being a freedom from pollution or stain).[11] By using the expression "*prakṛti vivikti lakṣaṇaṃ*," Haribhadra identifies the mind's primordial emptiness as a kind of innate purity (since it is primordially free from, "purified of," self-existence). In fact, it is quite possible to translate his expression "*prakṛti vivikti lakṣaṇaṃ*" in two equally valid ways: "the character of freedom from natural [existence]" (as in the translation above), or "the character of innate purity." Haribhadra has identified emptiness (in the Madhyamaka sense) itself as the innate purity of the mind, the mind being innately empty of self-existence both prior to and after attaining enlightenment.

In short, Haribhadra identifies *svābhāvikakāya* as two types of purity: first and more fundamental is the innate purity which is the emptiness of the Buddha's mind. And in conjunction with that is the adventitious purity which is its freedom from every type of mental obstruction (i.e. a Buddha's cessation of obstructions). In the introduction to this chapter, we presented some possible reasons for Haribhadra's identifying the *svābhāvikakāya* primarily with the emptiness of the Buddha. This followed naturally from Madhyamaka analysis, which seeks the essence of any phenomenon, and, deconstructing it, finds only its emptiness of self-

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[11] Monier-Williams, p. 987.

existence. Such a Madhyamaka analysis directed toward buddhahood finds only its emptiness. Hence, only the emptiness is appropriately called the Buddha's essence (*svabhāva*), his "essence body" (*svābhāvikakāya*). But why, in Haribhadra's comments above, is the adventitious purity of the Buddha's mind also identified with *svābhāvikakāya*?

One reason is related to the etymology of the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" which Ārya Vimuktisena had presented in his commentary centuries earlier. Ārya Vimuktisena had said that the *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body) was designated "essence" precisely because it was something which was not made or created. Essences in everyday life are understood to be those properties of things which are intrinsic to them, which need not be added to them or made in them. Similarly, said Ārya Vimuktisena, the *svābhāvikakāya* was attained by the supramundane path, but not made by it.[12] His comment is abstruse, but the notion of *svābhāvikakāya* as uncreated was an old notion in Yogācāra buddhology, deriving from the identification of *svābhāvikakāya* as *tathatāviśuddhi* (purified suchness) as well as *cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi* (innate purity of mind, see chapter 5, section 3 above). But in Ārya Vimuktisena's buddhology, as in the Yogācāra, the *svābhāvikakāya's* uncreatedness did not preclude its being identified in part with Buddha's gnosis, for Buddha's gnosis was epistemologically inseparable from the suchness (emptiness) it realized.

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[12] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, 92-5-1 to 2. See chapter 9, section 3 above.

Haribhadra wanted to identify the *svābhāvikakāya* with the emptiness of the Buddha's gnosis, and to carefully avoid identifying it with the gnosis itself. To do so, however, he still had to account for the traditional understanding and etymology of the word "*svābhāvikakāya*" according to which it was "obtained but not made." The emptiness of everyone's mind, not just the Buddha's, is innate to it. The emptiness of the mind, therefore, need not be obtained, being always its innate, ultimate nature. So Ārya Vimuktisena's statement that the *svābhāvikakāya* is "obtained" could not apply to the innate purity, the emptiness of the mind per se. But the adventitious purity of the Buddha's mind, its utter freedom from moral and cognitive obstructions, was something which had to be obtained by the supramundane path. Furthermore, the Buddha's cessation of mental obstructions is a permanent thing. It is not created out of causes and conditions, i.e. not "made." And the innate purity, the emptiness of the mind, was always its essential nature and never "made." Thus, in Haribhadra's account, the Buddha's obtainment of purity from adventitious defilement, his cessation of mental obstructions (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇaprahāṇa*), was an important defining feature of *svābhāvikakāya* and provided the rationale for the traditional etymology of its name as "obtained but not made."

Two "purities," then, comprised the *svābhāvikakāya* for Haribhadra. The first was the innate purity, Buddha's emptiness, which was the only "essence" of buddhahood (*svabhāva*) to be found upon ultimate analysis of it. The second was the adventitious purity, the Buddha's cessation of mental obstructions, which justified the traditional etymology of

"*svābhāvikakāya*" as something obtained but not created. Both types of "purity" identified by Haribhadra were permanent and unconditioned aspects of buddhahood which corresponded well to the traditional accounts of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya/tathāgatakāya* as unconditioned and permanent by nature (see chapter 5, sections 3 and the end of 5).

Another important consideration lies behind Haribhadra's comments above on *svābhāvikakāya*. According to its traditional formulation in Yogācāra texts, the *svābhāvikakāya* represents the continuity of something which has never changed, and, at the same time, the obtainment of something new. In the Yogācāra tradition, universal suchness, the *dharmadhātu*, which has always been the nature of the universe, has never changed, but is only discovered or realized through the path. Furthermore, the innate, pure, luminosity of the mind (*cittaprakṛtiprabhāsvara*) has always been the essence of every beings' mind, and as the essence of each mind, has never changed. According to the Yogācāra tradition, then, there is a continuity of suchness and of innate purity of mind which, at enlightenment, becomes the *svābhāvikakāya*. At the attainment of enlightenment, universal suchness (which has never changed) is perfectly and non-dually realized, and the innate purity of mind (which has never changed) is fully uncovered and shines forth (see chapter 5, section 3 above).

Universal suchness and innate luminous purity of mind, according to the Yogācāra formulation, are continuous and unchanging both before enlightenment and after it. However, also important in the Yogācāra formulation is the notion that the *svābhāvikakāya* is newly obtained by the

removal of all that had hidden suchness and all that had covered the innate purity of mind, the notion that the mental obstructions which hide suchness and cover the innate luminosity of ordinary beings are utterly and finally removed at the attainment of enlightenment. This removal of accidental mental obstructions from the essential purity of the mind constitutes the new attainment of the *svābhāvikakāya* (see chapters 4 and 5 above).

In the traditional Yogācāra formulation, mind and suchness, gnosis and the *dharmadhātu* it non-dually realizes at enlightenment, were not formally separated because of the Yogācāra emphasis on subject-object non-duality (according to which "subject" and "object" of cognition were merely conceptual constructs, *parikalpita*). Haribhadra wanted to reject what he saw as an implicit absolutism in the Yogācāra formulation of *svābhāvikakāya*: *svābhāvikakāya* understood as an independently existent, non-dual gnosis-suchness. As a Mādhyamika, he wanted to assert that the only essence of buddhahood findable on ultimate analysis was the emptiness of buddhahood, and that this was properly called "*svābhāvikakāya*," "essence body." But at the same time, he wanted to maintain the traditional concept of *svābhāvikakāya* as something which involved both the continuity of an innate purity which has never changed, and a new found purity which marked the new attainment of buddhahood. By interpreting the "innate purity" of buddhahood to be just the emptiness of the Buddha's mind (*śūnyatā*, the "non-arising nature" of the undefiled dharmas) and by reemphasizing the "adventitious purity" to be Buddha's newly obtained freedom from mental obstructions, Haribhadra found a

way to reaffirm the traditional understanding of *svābhāvikakāya* as both a continuity of an innate purity and a new obtainment of an accidental purity; while at the same time, he could redefine *svābhāvikakāya* in explicit Madhyamaka terms. Rejecting the Yogācāra formulation of *svābhāvikakāya* as a [self-existent] non-dual gnosis-reality, Haribhadra reinterpreted it as the emptiness of self-existence of buddhahood itself. In his view, for a thoroughgoing Mādhyamika, it was emptiness alone which was the proper essence of any thing, including buddhahood itself.[13]

Haribhadra's statement that the *svābhāvikakāya* is obtained through "the realization that consciousness and all phenomena are like illusions" (*"mayopamavijñānasarvadharmapratipatti"*) may also constitute a subtle Madhyamaka criticism of those late Yogācāra philosophers who had asserted consciousness itself was an independent, self-existent thing.[14]

Haribhadra then continues his remarks on *svābhāvikakāya*, discussing its logical relation to the other *kāyas* (which for Haribhadra are the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya*):

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[13] Given Haribhadra's concern for the innate purity of mind which becomes *svābhāvikakāya* as described above, it is indeed quite possible that his theory of *svābhāvikakāya* coordinates with his theory of *gotra*.

[14] The expression *"mayopamādvayajñ..na"* (non-dual gnosis of [all] as an illusion), as a reference to the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), is commonly found in Haribhadra's *Āloka*. But the expression *"mayopamavijñānasarvadharmapratipatti"* is not so common. Hence, our speculation that it may constitute a subtle swipe at the Yogācāras. Tibetan translates the latter: "rnam par shes pa sgyu ma lta bus chos thams cad rtogs pas" "[obtained through] the realization of all dharmas by consciousness which is like an illusion." The Sanskrit reads more easily as presented in the translation above. But Dharmamitra, who wrote the first sub-commentary on Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, the *Prasphuṭapadā*, glosses the expression in accordance with the Tibetan translation (Pk 5194, fols. 108-3-8 ff.).

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p.3, fols. 24b3-b4]

> The remaining three *kāyas* (bodies), appearing by [conformance to] true [worldly] convention (*tathyasaṃvṛtyā*), are ultimately (*parmārthataḥ*) the nature of *dharmatā*. Differentiated in accordance with [different] mentalities, they are established by being the cognitive objects for [three different types of person]: Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and *śrāvakas*, etc. In order to indicate this, the tradition (*nyāya*) says:
>
> "For the non-separateness of what is discerned from the discernment is accepted."
>
> which means that even though it [the *svābhāvikakāya*] is not separate from them [the conventional *kāyas*], it is posited as separate.

Here Haribhadra reaffirms his view that the *svābhāvikakāya* (defined in *AA* vs. 8.1) is to be understood primarily as the emptiness of buddhahood. As he makes clear in his comments on *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6, he distinguishes the set of undefiled dharmas per se (Buddha's mental qualities, gnosis) as a second *kāya*, which he calls the "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*" ("the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis"). Like other *AA* commentators, he understands *AA* vss. 8.12 and 8.33 to be teaching *sāṃbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively. Therefore, in his interpretation of *AA* 8, he posits a total of four *kāyas*. Of these, three *kāyas*, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*, are established through their phenomenal appearance as conventionalities to three different types of person. Buddhas conventionally perceive their own gnosis as the collection of undefiled dharmas, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*. *Ārya bodhisattvas* do not experience the gnosis of buddhahood itself. But having attained higher

reaches of the path, they are karmically pure enough to perceive the *sāmbhogikakāya* form of Buddha in the pure realms. *Śrāvakas* (i.e. non-Mahāyāna *arhats*), being less spiritually developed, as well as other less developed beings perceive, at best, the *nairmāṇikakāya*.

Previously we noted that in the original Yogācāra formulation of multiple *kāya* theory, the three Yogācāra *kāyas* were distinguished from each other epistemologically in terms of how and for whom each appeared. In the Yogācāra formulation, the *svābhāvikakāya* was the very essence of a Buddha's own realization, hence known only to a Buddha. The *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* appeared to *ārya bodhisattvas* and to other (less spiritually developed) beings respectively. This was the criterion in the Yogācāra tradition for distinguishing buddhahood as three (see chapter 5, section 2 above). Haribhadra reaffirms this Yogācāra criterion for distinguishing multiple *kāyas*, but he does so in a special way which makes the theory of multiple *kāyas* conform to Madhyamaka dialectic. In Haribhadra's formulation above, the Yogācāra epistemological criterion is used only to distinguish the three *kāyas* which appear on the conventional level of reality: what he identifies as the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya*. For Haribhadra, these three *kāyas* are distinguished epistemologically according to the type of person for whom each appears conventionally. He applies the Yogācāra criterion for distinguishing three different *kāyas* only to the conventional level of reality. On the ultimate level (*paramārthataḥ*), he says, all three of these conventional *kāyas* are understood to be one in their nature of *dharmatā*, their emptiness of self-

existence, ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*). And that emptiness of the conventional *kāyas* is precisely what he identifies as the *svābhāvikakāya*.

In the Yogācāra formulation, the *svābhāvikakāya* was understood to be the perfected realization of ultimate truth, which a Buddha realized only himself, while the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were conventional appearances for others. In Haribhadra's "Mādhyamikazation" of Yogācāra *kāya* theory, all epistemological distinctions separating the *kāyas* are to be made only on the conventional level. On the ultimate level, all *kāyas* are one in their emptiness of self-existence. In their ultimate nature of emptiness, they are all simply "the nature of *dharmatā*," the *svābhāvikakāya*. The *svābhāvikakāya* as the one nature of all *kāyas*, then, is not a thing separate from them. But on the level of discursive conceptualization, i.e. on the level of conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*), all four *kāyas* are distinguished from each other: the three conventional *kāyas* are distinguished from each other in accord with the mentalities of the persons for whom they conventionally appear. And the *svābhāvikakāya* as ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*) is distinguished conceptually from the other three *kāyas* as conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*).

Haribhadra's formulation avoids the Yogācāra tendency to identify Buddha's gnosis, together with the suchness it non-dually cognizes, as ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*). For Mādhyamikas, ultimate truth can only be what is found upon ultimate analysis (the sort of analysis set forth in the treatises of Nāgārjuna, and the great Mādhyamikas who followed him, including Śāntarakṣita). But upon ultimate analysis of anything,

including Buddha's gnosis itself, only emptiness is found. For Haribhadra, then, the *svābhāvikakāya* is to be understood as ultimate truth in the Mādhyamika sense, the emptiness of buddhahood alone, not its gnosis.

In support of his analysis, Haribhadra quotes the half-verse above: "For the non-separateness of what is discerned from the discernment is accepted." (*"viviktāvyatirekitvaṃ vivekasya yato matam."*). This half-verse appears in a quotation quoted by the scholar Triratnadāsa (ca. 5th-6th century CE) in his commentary on Dignāga's *Prajñāpāramitā-piṇḍārtha*. Triratnadāsa's commentary is called "*Prajñāpāramitā-saṃgraha-vivaraṇa*," and is only extant in Tibetan (Pk 5208) and Chinese (Taisho, no. 1517). Triratnadāsa does not identify the original source from which he quoted. But the fuller quotation he gives (in which Haribhadra's quoted half-verse is imbedded) and his own remarks indicate that the quote comes from a Yogācāra text which is establishing the non-separateness of suchness (*tathatā*) and the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) which non-dually cognizes it.

Prior to the half-verse quotation in question, Triratnadāsa says: "As it is declared, the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) is not other than suchness (*tathatā*), it is not at all separate from it. Rather it is like the lamp and its light." He then gives the quotation in which is imbedded the half-verse whch Haribhadra quoted (underlined): "Emptiness is not at all separate from the knowledge [of it]. <u>For the non-separateness of what is discerned from the discernment [of it] is accepted</u>. If this were not the case, it would imply that consciousness was not empty of duality. And

this would constitute the opposite of non-duality, which would imply there is a dual self. That being the case, it is taught that the nature of suchness is precisely the Bhagavat. For both the knower and the known are supported in consciousness itself."[15]

Haribhadra may well have drawn his quote from Triratnadāsa. If so, his quotation of the half-verse may represent another way in which he took a Yogācāra expression and reinterpretted it to give a Mādhyamika sense. In the Yogācāra expression, non-separateness is asserted with reference to an epistemological subject and object. In Haribhadra's interpretation, however, non-separateness is asserted primarily with reference to conventional existents and their ultimate nature of emptiness. Instead of focussing on the non-duality of gnosis as subject and suchness as object (*grāhya* and *grāhaka*) as in Yogācāra, Haribhadra explicitly identifies Buddha's gnosis (the undefiled dharmas) as a conventional existent and then focusses on the *svābhāvikakāya* as the emptiness of that gnosis, its ultimate nature. In other words, Haribhadra substitutes a Madhyamaka formulation of *dharmī* (conventional substratum) and *dharmatā* (emptiness, the ultimate nature of the conventional substratum) for the Yogācāra structure of *grāhya* (cognitive object) and *grāhaka* (cognitive subject). For the Yogācāras, the *svābhāvikakāya* was the realization in which gnosis and suchness as subject and object (*grāhaka* and *grāhya*) were inseparable. For Haribhadra, the *svābhāvikakāya* was reinterpreted primarily as the emptiness (*dharmatā*) of gnosis, rather than

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15 Triratnadāsa, *Prajñāpāramitā-saṃgraha-vivaraṇa*, Pk 5208, fols. 2-3-8 to 2-4-2.

the non-duality of gnosis-subject and emptness-object. Therefore, unlike Triratnadāsa, when Haribhadra quotes the half-verse above (which says that the discerned and the discernment are not separate) he means that the emptiness of a Buddha's gnosis (which Buddha discerns), and the gnosis itself (the discernment), are not spatially separate. The emptiness of the gnosis is a quality of the gnosis (its ultimate quality), not something separate from it. But, says Haribhadra, the emptiness of the gnosis (and of the form *kāyas* designated to it), is posited as separate from a conventional point-of-view.[16]

This completes Haribhadra's pithy explanation of the first of his four *kāyas*, the *svābhāvikakāya*. He continues his commentary by quoting *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 which, he says, concern the second *kāya*, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*:

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, pp. 3-4, fols. 24b4-25a4]

> Having thus explained the first *kāya*, the second [*kāya*] is declared, the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis free from discursive conceptualization (*dharmakāyaṃ niṣprapañcajñānātmakam*), whose character is the undefiled [dharmas] such as the mindfulnesses, etc.:
>
> "'The factors which foster enlightenment, the measureless thoughts, the liberations, the nine meditative attainments, the ten meditative totalities, the bases of overpowering divided into eight kinds, the meditative power freeing from passions, the gnosis resulting from resolve, the supernatural knowledges, the

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16 On the *dharmī-dharmatā* structure of Haribhadra's analysis of the *kāyas*, see Dharmamitra's subcommentary on the *Sphuṭārthā*: the *Prasphuṭapadā*, Pk 5194, pp. 108-109; and Abhayākaragupta (discussed in chapter 11, sec. 5 below).

analytical knowledges, the four total purities, the ten sovereignties, the ten powers, the four forms of fearlessness, the three ways in which [a Buddha] has nothing to hide, the threefold mindful equanimity, the nature of never forgetting, the complete destruction of [negative] propensities, the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience": thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated.' *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6

[These verses set forth:] (1) the factors which foster enlightenment beginning with the mindfulnesses and ending with the eight-fold path; (2) the measureless thoughts: love, etc. which are the four heavenly abodes, as earlier [explained]; (3) the eight liberations: two in which [the yogi], himself possessing form or not possessing form, beholds external forms; one in which [the yogi] manifests with his form the liberation of beauty, and fully obtaining it, abides [in it]; the four [formless] meditative attainments of space, consciousness, nothingness, and neither discrimination nor nondiscrimination; and the [attainment] of the cessation of discrimination and feeling; (4) the nine meditative states: the four concentrations of the form realm, the four formless meditative states, and the attainment of cessation; (5) the ten types of meditative totality: earth, water, fire, air, blue, yellow, red, white, consciousness, and space; (6) the eight kinds of bases of overpowering: four in which a person, [first] with the cognition that he himself has form, [then] with the cognition that he himself has no form, focusses upon external objects, [first] those of small size, [then] those of large size, and overpowering them, knows them; and four in which a person, just with the cognition that he himself has no form, overpowering blue, yellow, red and white, perceives them; (7) the meditative power which suppresses passions by eradicating the continuum of passions and delusions contained in others' mental continua; (8) the knowledge resulting from resolve, utterly free of all signs, all attachment eliminated, which continues for as long as *saṃsāra* and liberation exist, through its fulfillment of the resolution to remove the doubts [of all beings]; (9) the six supernatural knowledges and (10) the four analytical knowledges which were explained earlier; (11) the four purities: complete purity with respect to one's basis, objects, mind and gnosis; (12) the ten sovereignties: dominion over life, mind, requisites, action, birth, [whatever one is] interested in, [whatever one] has resolved,

supernatural power, gnosis, and truth; (13) the ten powers and (14) the four forms of fearlessness explained earlier; (15) the three ways in which [Buddha] has nothing to hide: the *tathāgata* has completely pure conduct of [his] body, speech, and mind; he has no wrong conduct which he would consider concealing, out of fear that others may discover it; (16) the threefold mindful equanimity: toward those who like listening to his teaching, those who like not to listen, and those [which include] both, [he is] free of attachment, aversion and both; equanimitous only he abides, possessed of mindfulness; (17) the nature of never forgetting, whose characteristic is that one never disregards when it is time to carry out the benefit of others; (18) the complete destruction of all negative propensities by having destroyed the seeds, the predispositions, of the moral and cognitive obstructions (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇa*); (19) the great compassion for living beings which is the resolute intention to help all beings; (20) the eighteen qualities unique to Buddha; (21) total omniscience (*sarvākārajñatā*).

Included in the word "and" [in the expression "and total omniscience" of *AA* vs. 8.6] is the knowledge of the path (*mārgajñatā*) and so forth, which were explained earlier.

According to some [scholars], the *dharmakāya* is explained as all of those [undefiled] dharmas, the factors fostering enlightenment, etc., consisting of gnosis free from discursive conceptualization, utterly transformed through basal transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*).

Haribhadra's prologue above is important: "Having thus explained the first *kāya*, the second [*kāya*] is declared: the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis ..., whose character is the undefiled [dharmas] such as the mindfulnesses, etc." Haribhadra interprets *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 to be identifying the collection of undefiled dharmas directly as a second *kāya*, called "*dharmakāya*." According to him, *AA* vs. 8.1 explained the first *kāya* (the *svābhāvikakāya*) as the emptiness of Buddha's gnosis. Then vss. 8.2-8.6 set forth the second *kāya*, (called "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6) which

is the gnosis itself, characterized as a collection of twenty-one types. He refers to this second *kāya* as the "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*," a "*dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis."

In Haribhadra's view, a Mādhyamika can only identify the *svābhāvikakāya*, defined in *AA* vs. 8.1 as the "innate nature" (*prakṛti*) of the undefiled dharmas, to be the *dharmatā* of those dharmas, their emptiness of self-existence. For him, to posit an ultimately existing, unconditioned and uncreated essence of buddhahood, and identify it as the *svābhāvikakāya* (as the Yogācāras were understood by him to have done), was to fall into a form of absolutism unacceptable for Mādhyamikas. Thus, the *svābhāvikakāya*, understood as the uncreated essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood, could only be properly interpreted by a Mādhyamika to be the emptiness of buddhahood itself. This fully accorded with Madhyamaka logic, according to which the real uncreated, "non-arising," essence of each thing, found upon ultimate analysis, is just the emptiness of that thing.

But according to this view, the set of undefiled dharmas itself, as Buddha's gnosis, had to be logically separated from its emptiness. The gnosis itself was the conventionally existent substratum (*dharmī*) of emptiness, and as a product of causes and conditions, was impermanent. The emptiness of the gnosis (identified as *svābhāvikakāya*) was logically distinguished as its unconditioned, ultimate nature (*dharmatā*), its emptiness of self-existence. Since Haribhadra identified the emptiness alone as the *svābhāvikakāya*, the conventionally existent gnosis itself,

logically separated from its emptiness, could no longer be identified as *svābhāvikakāya* (as it had been in the Yogācāra formulation).

According to the traditional Yogācāra formulation, the three *kāyas* were distinguished epistemologically according to who perceived them (Buddhas, *ārya bodhisattvas*, and lesser beings perceived the *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively; see chapter 5, section 2). In Haribhadra's new Madhyamaka formulation, the *svābhāvikakāya* was separated out from the others, not epistemologically (as in the Yogācāra formulation), but logically (as the *dharmatā* of the other *kāyas*). This left Buddha's gnosis (the collection of undefiled dharmas) logically separate from the *svābhāvikakāya* on the one hand and epistemologically separate from *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* on the other.

According to Haribhadra, only the emptiness of Buddha's gnosis (*dharmatā*) was *svābhāvikakāya*, not the gnosis itself. But while *ārya bodhisattvas* perceived the *sāmbhogikakāya* and lesser beings perceived the *nairmāṇikakāya*, only Buddhas were directly aware of their own gnosis. Therefore, according to the traditional criterion for distinguishing *kāyas*, the collection of undefiled dharmas itself had to be identified in its own right as a distinct *kāya*. The Yogācāra criterion for distinguishing *kāyas* epistemologically was shifted in Haribhadra's analysis to the conventional level alone. Three conventionally existent *kāyas* still had to be distinguished according to who perceived them: Buddhas, aware of their own gnosis, perceived the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* (the collection of undefiled dharmas), *ārya bodhisattvas* perceived the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and

others perceived the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Conventionally, then, three *kāyas* were now distinguished according to the traditional epistemological criterion. But the *svābhāvikakāya* was to be distinguished from all of them logically (not epistemologically) according to Madhyamaka principles. On the ultimate level, there was only the *dharmatā*, the emptiness of buddhahood, the emptiness of all three conventional *kāyas*. And that, according to Haribhadra, was the *svābhāvikakāya*.

We may recall from our discussion in chapter 2 above, that Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmikas had identified the collection of undefiled dharmas (Buddha's mental qualities) per se as *dharmakāya*. They understood that collection to comprise the essence of buddhahood in its own right. As noted in chapters 3 and 4 above, the *PP sūtras* and the Yogācāra tradition had scrupulously avoided identifying the undefiled dharmas per se as *dharmakāya*, since they were understood in those traditions to comprise merely a phenomenal description of buddhahood, not its essence. In the *PP sūtras* and Yogācāra tradition, then, *dharmakāya* (or *svābhāvikakāya*) was just the perfected non-dual realization of suchness. Haribhadra, in a sense, resurrected the Abhidharma formulation, by again identifying the collection of undefiled dharmas per se as *dharmakāya* (the "*dharmakāya*" of *AA* vs. 8.6). But as a Mādhyamika, his resurrection of the Abhidharma formula was only made with reference to the conventional level of reality. According to Haribhadra, on the conventional level, the undefiled dharmas were an epistemologically distinguished *kāya*, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, comprising the mind of Buddha. Ultimately, however, emptiness was the

only real essence of a Buddha, and so it was this alone which he identified as *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body).

In the traditional Yogācāra formulation, *svābhāvikakāya* was Buddha's perfected realization of ultimate truth (suchness), in the yogic experience of which, gnosis and suchness (subject and object) were no longer distinguishable. In that formulation, the *svābhāvikakāya* (synonymous with *dharmakāya* in its exclusive sense) was closely identified with ultimate truth, while the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were merely conventional appearances for others. In line with this, the list of undefiled dharmas, as a discursively conceptualized collection, was also relegated to the conventional level. It constituted an historical survival in Mahāyāna texts from earlier Buddhism, but was understood in the Yogācāra tradition as a description of buddhahood from a mere phenomenal point-of-view which no longer captured its essence (see chapter 4, section 3 above).

Ārya Vimuktisena saw in *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 the traditional Yogācāra pattern of using "*svābhāvikakāya*" and "*dharmakāya*" as synonyms. He understood the verses to be saying that the *svābhāvikakāya*, which was the *dharmakāya*, was the very essence that was denominated in terms of the undefiled dharmas (though not to be identified with them). Haribhadra ignored this traditional pattern to declare the "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 a separate *kāya*, identified directly with the set of undefiled dharmas per se. This broke the long established pattern in both the *PP sūtras* and Yogācāra tradition of never identifying the *dharmakāya* with any mere

collection of conventionalities, no matter how exalted a collection (see chapter 3 and chapter 4, section 2 above).

It appears that in Haribhadra's view, the Yogācāra identification of Buddha's non-dual gnosis so closely with ultimate truth as *svābhāvikakāya* was absolutistic. And for this reason, he redefined *svābhāvikakāya* in strictly Madhyamaka terms as just the emptiness of Buddha's gnosis (emptiness itself being the only ultimately identifiable essence (*svabhāva*) in buddhahood for Mādhyamikas). But then, in Haribhadra's formulation, the Buddha's gnosis as conventional truth was separated and distinguished from the *svābhāvikakāya* as ultimate truth. Haribhadra read *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 as designating Buddha's gnosis, in its own right, as a conventional existent and as a *kāya* distinct from *svābhāvikakāya* (i.e. as the [*jñānātmaka*] *dharmakāya*).

In Haribhadra's comments on *AA* vs. 8.1 quoted earlier (Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4), he says that the three conventional *kāyas* are distinguished according to the persons who perceive them on the conventional level. He says: "The remaining three *kāyas* [*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*], appearing by true worldly convention, are ultimately the nature of *dharmatā*. Differentiated in accordance with [different] mentalities, they are established by being the cognitive objects for Buddhas, bodhisattvas, *śrāvakas*, etc." This means that the set of undefiled dharmas (comprising Buddha's gnosis) is perceived by Buddha himself as a conventional existent, and that this is precisely what distinguishes it as a conventional *kāya*: the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*. In the earlier traditions a Buddha's gnosis per se was

understood to be the non-dual cognition of suchness, epistemologically inseparable from ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*, see chapters 4 and 5 above). In Haribhadra's scheme, Buddha's gnosis is now distinguished in itself as conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*). And as conventional truth, it is cognized as distinct from ultimate truth within Buddha's own awareness.

It is not clear whether Haribhadra realized how radical a departure this was from earlier Mahāyāna buddhology. In the *PP sūtras* and in the Yogācāra tradition (as well as in Madhyamaka texts such as the *Madhyamakāvatāra* and *Trikāyastotra*) the Buddha's gnostic realization per se was understood to have become epistemologically one with the realm of *paramārtha* (the *dharmadhātu*). Ontologically, all things are one in their ultimate nature of suchness. Therefore, epistemologically, a Buddha knows all things through that one ultimate nature, perceives all things through the one taste (*ekarasa*) which they share. The Buddha's perception of universal suchness is his *nirvikalpajñāna*; his knowing of all things through that is his *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*. And just as his *pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna* pervades the universe based upon his *nirvikalpajñāna*, so do his limitless manifestations and activities pervade the universe (see chapter 5, sections 3 and 4 above).

In the traditional three *kāya* formulation, then, Buddha's realization itself as *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* was epistemologically one with the ultimate realm, the realm of *paramārtha*, the *dharmadhātu* (*anāsravadhātu*, *dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, etc.). Based on that realization, manifestations appeared in the phenomenal realm, the realm of *saṃvṛti*, to

carry out enlightened activity for beings, those manifestations being the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*. The *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* was the realization of the realm of ultimate truth, while the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were merely appearances for others within the realm of conventional truth.[17] In other words, a Buddha's awareness of the phenomenal world per se, and his manifestations within that world, were all expressions of his non-conceptual gnosis (which was epistemologically one with the realm of ultimate truth), as it was transactionally related to and came under the purview of ordinary beings (non-Buddhas).

In the three *kāya* formulation, then, the essential realization of buddhahood (*svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*) was entirely beyond conceptual construction and differentiation. The list of undefiled dharmas was understood as a mere phenomenal description of a Buddha's gnosis, a description from our point-of-view (not Buddha's). But according to Haribhadra's four *kāya* formulation, Buddha perceived his own realization in terms of those dharmas. For him, the list of undefiled dharmas represented not just a description of Buddha's gnosis from our point-of-view, but a description from Buddha's own point-of-view. This meant that, in Haribhadra's formulation, Buddha's gnostic realization per se was no longer understood to inhabit the realm of *paramārtha* alone. Buddha

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[17] This took explicit expression in the *Ratnagotravibhāga's* special terminology for the *kāyas*: "*paramārtha kāya*" (corresponding to *svābhāvikakāya*) and "*saṃvṛti kāya*" (corresponding to the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*); RGV chapter 3.

himself distinguished within his own awareness an aspect of conventional truth and an aspect of ultimate truth.[18]

In Haribhadra's formulation of *kāya* theory, the set of undefiled dharmas is distinguished as a separate *kāya* (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) precisely because it is an appearance, within the realm of conventional truth, for Buddha himself. It is precisely because a Buddha's awareness distinguishes the set of undefiled dharmas (as conventional truth) from their *śūnyatā* (as ultimate truth) that the undefiled dharmas are distinguished as a separate *kāya*. Since conventional truth and ultimate truth can only be differentiated by discursive thought, Haribhadra's theory entailed that a Buddha's own gnostic realization contains conceptual differentiation within it. Haribhadra may not have intended this implication, but it is inescapable. This, in turn, would imply that conventional truth is not just the conceptually constructed world of

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18 In his *Sphuṭārthā*, Haribhadra distinguished the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* from his other two conventional *kāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*) epistemologically, according to the types of person for whom each is a cognitive object (Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4 above). Buddhas, he said, conventionally cognize the set of undefiled dharmas (= *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*), while bodhisattvas and lesser beings cognize the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively. This entails that Buddhas themselves distinguish the undefiled dharmas conventionally, through their own discursive conceptualization. Haribhadra may not have intended this outcome, but it is implied by his buddhology.

If, in giving his epistemological criterion for distinguishing the undefiled dharmas as a separate *kāya*, Haribhadra had only meant that sentient beings conceptually construct the undefiled dharmas and then impute them onto buddhahood, he would have had no reason whatsoever to distinguish them as a separate *kāya*. For his three conventional *kāyas* are distinguished precisely according to whom they appear, and the *nairmāṇikakāya* is already identified as that aspect of buddhahood distinguished by its appearance to ordinary beings. If Haribhadra had been fully consistent with earlier Mahāyāna buddhology, according to which Buddhas experience their own gnostic realization entirely free of conceptual differentiation, he could not have distinguished *svābhāvikakāya* from *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, since the latter is only distinguished from the former conceptually, and is only experienced directly by Buddhas.

ordinary beings (non-Buddhas), but that Buddhas themselves conceptually construct conventional truth within their own gnostic realization per se. This constitutes a different understanding of Buddha's gnosis, and quite possibly of conventional truth itself, than we have seen in the earlier traditions.

In Yogācāra buddhology (and also in important Madhyamaka buddhology prior to Haribhadra, such as that in Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*)[19] a Buddha's mind "inhabited" the ultimate realm, the realm of *paramārtha*. It did not inhabit the phenomenal world per se. Rather it knew the phenomenal world and gave rise to action within it through its non-dual cognition of the *paramārtha* (ultimate) nature of the world. Implicit in Haribhadra's buddhology, however, is the implication that Buddha's mind inhabits both realms equally. Since within a Buddha's own private gnostic realization, his mind discursively distinguishes between conventional and ultimate truth, it would follow that a Buddha similarly discursively distinguishes other conventionalities as well. And this would imply that a Buddha's gnosis validates conventionalities just as much as it validates their emptiness. In that case Buddha's awareness of the phenomenal world is not merely an expression of his non-dual gnosis of its suchness, but is on equal terms with it. A Buddha doesn't cognize phenomena based upon or through his gnosis of their suchness. He

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19 As noted previously, according to the *buddhabhūmi* chapter of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*,, all phenomena share the ultimate nature of "thatness" (*tattvam*); and a Buddha cognizes all phenomena through his perfected, non-dual cognition of their thatness; he knows all things "in one taste" (*ekarasa*). See Poussin's Tibetan edition, pp. 356 ff. This will be further discussed below.

cognizes phenomena qua phenomena, just like he cognizes their suchness. Then conventionalities, like their suchness, would be equally validated by a Buddha's direct cognition. And this would tend to grant to conventionalities an ontological status equal to their suchness. Conventionalities per se would be as real as their emptiness.

All of these issues lay implicit in Haribhadra's buddhology (whether or not he was fully aware of it), and they caused the forceful rejection by some later Indian and Tibetan scholars of his four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. In the view of some later scholars (such as the Indians Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta, and Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge of Tibet), Haribhadra, by ignoring the earlier understanding of buddhahood (as a yogic realization largely inconceivable to us) and by arriving at a new understanding of it based on his own independent inference, projected his own logical categories onto buddhahood and then mistook them for buddhahood itself. Other later Indian and Tibetan scholars however (notably Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa in Tibet), , defended Haribhadra's theory. This will be discussed further in chapters 11 and 12 below.[20]

At the end of Haribhadra's remarks quoted above, he says that "some" scholars identify the *dharmakāya* (of vs. 8.6, meaning the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) as the collection of undefiled dharmas per se. In fact, this represents his own view, as he makes clear in his prologue to vss. 8.2-8.6

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[20] See also, below, our discussion of Haribhadra's comments in his *Sphuṭārthā* (Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-25a6) where he ascribes primary sense consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*) to a Buddha's gnosis, which also runs counter to earlier buddhological traditions.

above and throughout his commentary on *AA* 8. It was also quite possibly the view of his teacher Vairocana, to whom he pays respect in the closing verses of his *Āloka* (Wogihara, p. 993), and probably of some other Mādhyamika scholars of his time.

In his comments on vss. 8.2-8.6, Haribhadra briefly glosses each of the undefiled dharmas listed in the verses. In several places he refers his readers back to earlier portions of his commentary (especially chapters 1 and 4) where several of them were already discussed. The list of undefiled dharmas, of course, is very old in Buddhism. The list that appears in *AA* 8 was drawn from the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra* (passage VIII 5) as we noted in chapters 7 and 8 above. The list appears in that *sūtra* as a phenomenal expression of buddhahood which, for the most part, was drawn from earlier Abhidharma sources (see chapters 2 and 3 above). Haribhadra's glosses on several of the undefiled dharmas, therefore, are drawn from Abhidharma descriptions (probably mainly the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, which is one of his reference texts for the *Āloka*). Some merely repeat what Ārya Vimuktisena had already said. Many Indian and Tibetan commentators on the *AA* after Haribhadra also gave extensive commentary on each of the undefiled dharmas. Virtually the same list of dharmas also appears in Yogācāra texts such as the *MSA* and *Msg*, and their commentaries also include extensive discussion of each of them.[21] On *sarvākārajñatā* (total omniscience, "the knowledge of all

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21 The *AA* commentaries by Bhadanta Vimuktisena, Dharmamitra, Dharmakīrtiśrī, Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta, etc. also explicate the list of undefiled dharmas at varying lengths. Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad gser 'phreng* has extensive discussion of the undefiled dharmas, relating several of Haribhadra's descriptions to those in the

aspects"), Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary presented a range of the opinions of his period (see chapter 9, section 3) which Haribhadra does not repeat.

The list of undefiled dharmas in vss. 8.2-8.6 ends: "... the great compassion for living beings, the qualities unique to the Sage proclaimed as eighteen, and total omniscience..." (underlining is my own). Haribhadra gives an unusual gloss on the word "and" ("ca"), saying "included in the word 'and' is the knowledge of the path" (*mārgajñatā*), etc. which were explained earlier." By this he probably means both path knowledge (*mārgajñatā*) and all-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*), which together with total omniscience (*sarvākārajñatā*) comprise the subject matter of the *AA's* first three chapters. This gives an unusual reading for the word "and," but enables Haribhadra to add further elements to the list of undefiled dharmas which would align it more precisely with the *AA's* total content. Haribhadra's comment here provides some evidence corroborating his connection to the revised version of the 25,000 *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, because it is only in that particular version of the *sūtra* that all three terms (*sarvākārajñatā*, *mārgajñatā*, *sarvajñatā*) are listed together at the end of the list of the undefiled dharmas (in *rP* passage VIII 1, see chapter 7, section 2.B.5. above).

In chapters 4 and 5 above, we described the Mahāyāna textual buddhology which was taking shape from about the 3rd to the 6th century

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*Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 233a-239a). gYag ston sangs rgyas dpal's *Rin po che'i phreng ba blo gsal mgul rgyan* also has detailed discussion of them. For a bibliography of descriptions of the undefiled dharmas in Indian Buddhist literature, see *Msg*, Lamotte, pp. 51*-61*. See also Lamotte's *Le Traite de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse* for detailed descriptions.

in India, especially in Yogācāra circles. The descriptions of buddhahood we found in those texts were infinite in scope. A Buddha's gnosis and activity was understood to literally pervade the universe. The *dharmadhātu* being utterly limitless and undivided, Buddha's non-dual gnosis of it was also limitless, pervading all. Through this, his spontaneous activity was said to be operative at all times and places. Since this understanding of buddhahood was so prevalent in textual Mahāyāna Buddhism at the time the *AA* was composed (ca. 4th to early 6th century CE), it is a bit startling to read the list of undefiled dharmas in *AA* chapter 8 as a primary description of a Buddha's gnostic qualities. Many of the items in that list of dharmas appear trivial in light of the buddhology of the time. Included in the list, for example, are the "three ways in which a Buddha has nothing to hide": i.e. a Buddha doesn't misbehave in any way which would cause him to hide the fact from others' disapproval. Also included is the "three-fold mindful equanimity," according to which a Buddha doesn't get angry with people who don't like to listen to him. How remarkable are these qualities for one whose mind literally pervades the entire universe?

As we noted in chapter 4 above, the list of undefiled dharmas is an historical survival within Mahāyāna descriptions of buddhahood which comes from much earlier periods in Buddhism. Much of the list was obviously compiled at a time when the conception of a Buddha focussed more on human qualities, and less on infinitely pervasive powers. As such, the list is in some ways embarrasingly unsuited to the task of describing the gnostic qualities of buddhahood during the period of the

flowering of more all-encompassing buddhological conceptions. As we noted in chapters 7 and 8 above, however, the *AA's* author was constrained by his textual basis in the *PP sūtra* to place the list of undefiled dharmas at the center of his description of the *svābhāvikakāya*. *AA* vss. 8.7 through 8.11, in fact, appear (in part) to constitute the author's attempt to update that list of undefiled dharmas, to interpret it in such a way as to bring it up to the standards of contemporary Mahāyāna buddhology (see translation of these verses below).

For reasons we can only speculate on, the *AA* became an enormously popular text in later Indian Buddhism and then in Tibet. This may have occurred with the rise in influence of the Madhyamaka school, since the *AA* lent itself far more easily to Madhyamaka interpretation than other main texts on Mahāyāna practise such as the *MSA* and *Msg*. In fact, in Tibet, the *AA* gradually eclipsed texts such as the *MSA* to become the central treatise for Tibetan scholars on the non-Tantric Mahāyāna paths and stages.[22] With the rise in popularity of the *AA*, the list of undefiled dharmas found in its 8th chapter was resurrected as a primary description of buddhahood within the Mahāyāna tradition. The irony is that the gnoseology and buddhology of Indian Mahāyāna textual traditions was

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[22] The various indices and bibliographies of Tibetan literature indicate that, although Yogācāra texts such as the *MSA* were popular bases for commentary in 11th and 12th century Tibet, such commentaries became very rare in later centuries, while commentaries on the *AA* became increasingly common. The *AA* became one of the five principal fields of study in Tibetan monasteries (along with Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, Vinaya, and Epistemology/Logic). It became the primary basis for study of Mahāyāna practises, paths and stages to enlightenment, while other "texts of Maitreya," such as the *MSA* (whose explanation of Mahāyāna practise is much more extensive and readable than the *AA's*) became adjunct and less studied at the major monasteries.

already outgrowing that list of undefiled dharmas at the time the *AA* was composed.

Haribhadra's commentary on *AA* chapter 8 continues by launching into a debate with those who would adhere to the traditional three *kāya* interpretation of the text. He presents further reasons for rejecting such a view and adopting the new, four *kāya* interpretation which he offers. He begins by paraphrasing part of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary and then rebutting it:

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 5, fols. 25a4-25a6]

> But, others explain that: "The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects, the *svābhāvikakāya* of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic" (*AA* vs. 8.1), literally means that, it being agreed upon that the supramundane undefiled dharmas [are the Buddha's gnosis], the *svābhāvikakāya* is what possesses their innate nature (*prakṛti*), non-arisingness (*anutpādatā*), as its property. And it [the *svābhāvikakāya*] is also the *dharmatākāya*, this being indicated by [the concluding word of vs. 8.6]:"*dharmakāya*," through the ellision of the particle that indicates abstract nouns ("-*tā*"). Then they [raise the hypothetical] question: "What are those undefiled dharmas, the innate nature of which the *dharma[tā]kāya* has as its property?" And they set forth [*AA*] verses [8.2-8.6] [as answer to this]: "The factors which foster enlightenment,..." etc.
>
> Others [reply that] [Buddha's] non-dual primary consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaittāḥ*), transformed through the transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), are what carry out [his] activities of teaching the dharma, etc. by generating appearances which have specific purposes in conformance to the conventional [perspective] of yogi [disciples]. How, according to those [whose assertion is immediately above], are those [primary consciousnesses and mental factors] which must surely be accepted, included [within the *kāyas*]?

The first paragraph above is Haribhadra's paraphrase of Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary on *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6. The second paragraph is his own response. There is a very subtle way, however, in which Haribhadra misrepresents Ārya Vimuktisena. Recall from chapter 9 above that concerning *AA* vs. 8.1, Ārya Vimuktisena wrote: "Of the completely purified, undefiled all-dharmas, possessed of the *dharmadhātu*, the innate nature (*rang bzhin*, *prakṛti*), the essence (*ngo bo nyid*, *svabhāva*), is to be known as the Essence Body (*svābhāvikakāya*), [where "essence"] means it is uncreated. It is well known in the world that an "essence" (*svabhāva*) is that which is not made. The supramundane path obtains the [*svābhāvikakāya*], it is not its creator."[23]

In Haribhadra's view, *AA* vs. 8.1 surely meant emptiness when it described *svābhāvikakāya* as the "innate nature" of the undefiled dharmas. Why shouldn't buddhahood be viewed as an object of Mādhyamika logical analysis just like any other phenomenon? Then, upon ultimate analysis, the only "innate nature" findable is its emptiness, just like any other phenomenon. Haribhadra believed that Ārya Vimuktisena was also a Mādhyamika.[24] Then to say, as Ārya Vimuktisena did, that the *svābhāvikakāya* is "obtained" but not "created" would naturally be interpreted to mean that as emptiness, it is never created, but as the emptiness of the utterly pure enlightened mind, it is attained. Recall that

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23 *Abhisamayālamkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 92-4-8 to 92-5-2. See also chapter 9, section 3 above on Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary.
24 *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1975 p.3.

in Haribhadra's interpretation of vs. 8.1, Buddha's "adventitious purity," i.e. his mind's freedom from cognitive obstructions, is an attainment; but Buddha's "innate purity," the emptiness of his mind, is unconditioned and uncreated. There, Haribhadra said that the innate nature (*prakṛti*) of the undefiled dharmas is their nature of "non-arising" (*anutpāda-rūpaḥ*) and that that is the *svābhāvikakāya* (see earlier translation above). In other words, he explicitly identified the *svābhāvikakāya* taught in *AA* vs. 8.1 as the emptiness of a Buddha's purified mind, as emptiness logically distinguished from gnosis.

But as his comments just above make clear, Haribhadra assumed that Ārya Vimuktisena also identified emptiness per se as the *svābhāvikakāya*. In his comments above, Haribhadra subtly alters Ārya Vimuktisena's meaning by putting the term "non-arisingness" ("*anutpādatā*") into his mouth, a Madhyamaka buzzword for emptiness (*śūnyatā*). In Haribhadra's paraphrase, he has Ārya Vimuktisena identify the innate nature (*prakṛti*) of the undefiled dharmas (taught as *svābhāvikakāya* in *AA* vs. 8.1) to be "non-arisingness" (*anutpādatā*). In Madhyamaka terminology, this refers specifically to emptiness (*śūnyatā*) per se, the non-arising, unconditioned final nature of phenomena. According to Haribhadra, then, Ārya Vimuktisena identified the first of his three *kāyas*, the *svābhāvikakāya*, to be emptiness per se, emptiness logically distinguished from gnosis, just emptiness. In fact, Ārya Vimuktisena did no such thing.

Here again are Ārya Vimuktisena's own words:

> "Of the completely purified, undefiled all-dharmas, possessed of the *dharmadhātu*, the innate nature (*rang bzhin, prakṛti*), the essence (*ngo bo nyid, svabhāva*), is to be known as the Essence Body (*svābhāvikakāya*), [where "essence"] means it is uncreated. It is well known in the world that an "essence" (*svabhāva*) is that which is not made. The supramundane path obtains the [*svābhāvikakāya*], it is not its creator." (*Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti*, Pk 5185, fol. 92-4-8 to 92-5-2).

As discussed above in chapter 9, Ārya Vimuktisena identified the "innate nature" (*prakṛti*) of the undefiled dharmas (i.e. the *svābhāvikakāya*) as the non-dual gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (universal emptiness) not just emptiness alone. He characterized Buddha's gnosis (the undefiled dharmas) as "possessed of the *dharmadhātu*," meaning not just that it is empty (all things are empty in Mahāyāna metaphysics), but that it non-dually cognizes the *dharmadhātu*. The reason he did this is that, as his comments on vss. 8.2-8.6 made clear, he considered the list of undefiled dharmas to be only a conventional imputation upon the *svābhāvikakāya* made in accord with the collection of dharmas (distinct gnoses) which used to exist for the bodhisattva prior to buddhahood. For him, the non-dual gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* was the very essence, the actual nature (*prakṛti*) of *svābhāvikakāya*, the list of undefiled dharmas being just a phenomenal imputation upon it (see chapter 9, section 3 above).

Ārya Vimuktisena's gnoseology and buddhology followed the Yogācāra pattern of identifying the *svābhāvikakāya* as the non-dual gnosis

of the *dharmadhātu*, based upon which the *sāmbhogikakāya*, the *nairmāṇikakāya*, and the set of undefiled dharmas were merely imputed from a phenomenal point-of-view. In line with Yogācāra buddhology, then, Ārya Vimuktisena understood the *svābhāvikakāya* to be unconditioned in several broad senses: the *svābhāvikakāya* is a non-dual gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (universal suchness). As such, it is unconditioned in its cognitive identification with suchness and in its permanent cessation of the cognitive obscurations which prevented such an identification. Suchness, as the ultimate nature of all things, is never newly created, i.e. is unconditioned. What is obtained through the yogic path is simply the non-dual awareness of it (which is the *svābhāvikakāya*). Further, the innate, luminous purity of the mind is revealed at enlightenment, never created. In this sense, too, the *svābhāvikakāya* is obtained but not made, since it represents the removal of what covered the innate purity of mind, the revelation of what was always there, not the creation of something new. To call the *svābhāvikakāya* "uncreated," or "unconditioned" in these senses is a broader use of the term than Haribhadra permitted in his analysis.

Even if Ārya Vimuktisena was indeed a Mādhyamika (as Haribhadra thought), he adhered to the basic Yogācāra formulation of *svābhāvikakāya* as non-dual gnosis of suchness (emptiness). But Haribhadra, steeped in the logico-Mādhyamika traditions which became so prominent in the centuries between Ārya Vimuktisena and himself, interpreted Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks from his own late 8th century perspective. He therefore assumed that Ārya Vimuktisena, as a Mādhyamika, had

identified *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone (distinct from gnosis). For Haribhadra, a thing was either unconditioned or conditioned. In his view, emptiness, for example, was unconditioned, and gnosis, being a form of awareness, was conditioned. Therefore, in Haribhadra's view, for Ārya Vimuktisena (a Mādhyamika like himself) to say that the *svābhāvikakāya* was uncreated (i.e. unconditioned), had to mean that he identified *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness distinct from gnosis. It is for this reason that Haribhadra, in his comments above, has Ārya Vimuktisena specifically identify "non-arisingness," emptiness alone, as the *svābhāvikakāya*. But as a perusal of chapters 4 through 9 above shows, it was very common in earlier Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions to call buddhahood in general and *svābhāvikakāya* in particular "permanent," or "unconditioned" without employing the terms only in the later, strict logical sense that Haribhadra assigned to them.

Having misrepresented Ārya Vimuktisena's view by having him say that emptiness alone (logically distinct from gnosis) is the *svābhāvikakāya* of the three *kāya* scheme, Haribhadra then presents his own principal argument for positing a fourth *kāya*. In the second paragraph quoted above, he says: "Others [reply that] [Buddha's] non-dual consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaittāḥ*), ... are what carry out [his] activities of teaching the dharma, etc. by generating appearances which have specific purposes in conformance to the conventional [perspective] of yogi [disciples]. How, according to those [like Ārya Vimuktisena who assert three *kāyas*], are those [consciousnesses and mental factors] which must surely be accepted, included [within the *kāyas*]?" Contained in this

seemingly innocent question is the core of the entire rationale for positing four rather than three *kāyas*. And based on this rationale, Haribhadra believes, one should be predisposed to read the verses of *AA* as teaching four *kāyas*, since that is the only reasonable thing for them to be teaching.

Haribhadra, based on Abhidharma tradition (he quotes Vasubandhu and the *Abhidharmakośa* in his *Āloka*), borrows from Abhidharma analysis of mind (where "*citta*," "primary consiousnesses," are the basic sense consciousnesses and "*caitta*," "mental factors," are the various secondary factors of consciousness, such as attention, memory, feeling, discernment, etc.). He believes that Buddha's gnosis (as the collection of undefiled dharmas) is divided into various primary sense consciousnesses and mental factors, much like the awareness of ordinary beings (although a Buddha is free, of course, from the mental obstructions of ordinary beings). He comes to this conclusion based on the fact that a Buddha is actively engaged in the world. All Mahāyānists agree that a Buddha's mind (the *dharmakāya*) manifests various appearances in the world to work for beings (such as the *nairmāṇikakāya* Śakyamuni). In order to do this, a Buddha must possess all the primary sense consciousnesses and mental factors necessary to perceive what needs to be done and then to take specific actions in the world for the right persons at the right time through the proper manifestation. Haribhadra reasons that, given a Buddha's activity in the world, a Buddha must be possessed of consciousnesses and mental factors necessary to generate such activity. This, he says, "must surely be accepted." Then if the *svābhāvikakāya* is understood to be only the emptiness of a Buddha's consciousnesses and

mental factors (as he has Ārya Vimuktisena say), then the consciousnesses and mental factors themselves are not assignable to any of the three traditionally accepted *kāyas*. The consciousnesses and mental factors are not the *svābhāvikakāya*, since the *svābhāvikakāya* is their emptiness alone. They are not *sāmbhogikakāya* or *nairmāṇikakāya*, because as the primary cause for generating such manifestations, they are not the manifestations themselves. Furthermore, the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are distinguished epistemologically by reference to the persons who cognize them (*ārya bodhisattvas* and lesser beings respectively), but only a Buddha is directly cognizes his own mind. Thus, in accord with the traditional epistemological criterion for distinguishing *kāyas*, the consciousnesses and mental factors themselves, i.e. the collection of undefiled dharmas, must be designated as a separate *kāya*, the "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*," and this is surely what the *AA* is teaching.

This reasoning is at the very center of Haribhadra's analysis of buddhahood in four *kāyas*, and is repeated in various forms throughout his commentaries on *AA* 8.[25] In his view, the Madhyamaka analysis of ultimate and conventional truth was needed to counter the possible substantialism in the three *kāya* theory as formulated orginally by the Yogācāras. Equally important, the application of such a Madhyamaka analysis could sort out what he saw as a confusion concerning the aspects

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[25] *Āloka*, Wogihara, pp. 20-21 (where Haribhadra distinguishes four *kāyas* in *AA* vs. 1.17 in these terms), 914 (glossing vs. 8.1), 916 (on vss. 8.2-8.6 debating with Ārya Vimuktisena), and 925 (where he explains Buddha's activity through the manifestation of *rūpakāyas* generated by conditioned gnosis). The parallel passages in the *Sphuṭārthā* occur in Amano, 1975, pp. 262, 268, 292; Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4, 25a4-25a6, 27b3-27b7.

of buddhahood which were unconditioned and those which were conditioned. By applying such an analysis of ultimate and conventional truth, together with the methods of Buddhist logic, he could identify, more rigorously than before, the unconditioned essence of buddhahood (the *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness). And he could clearly distinguish that from the conditioned essence of buddhahood upon which all of a Buddha's enlightened activity and manifestation depended (the gnosis, *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*). In Haribhadra's view, the proponents of three *kāyas* were left with an unconditioned *svābhāvikakāya* as the sole source of a Buddha's conditioned activity in the world. For him, this was not an exalted paradox of buddhahood, but a confusion of bad logic which the Madhyamaka analysis of two truths, properly applied, could finally sort out.

Haribhadra's application of such logico-Mādhyamika inference was intended by him to serve a crucial hermeneutic purpose toward the interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. For, in his view, given the ambiguities inherent in the *AA* verses, independent reasoning of the sort he espoused was needed to infer what the author of the *AA* had intended. If *AA* 8's verses were ambiguous enough in themselves so as to permit the interpretation of either three or four *kāyas*, one had to fall back on logic and reason to determine which was the better theory. Then, since according to Haribhara, Maitreya himself had composed the *AA*, one had some assurance that the better or truer theory was the one which Maitreya was probably espousing. Then, in conjunction with that, if one read the Sanskrit of *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 to be directly teaching a separate "*jñānātmaka*

*dharmakāya*" as Haribhadra did (see chapter 8, section 3 above), one had at least a little philological evidence, combined with powerful inferential evidence, for interpreting the *AA* as a four *kāya* text.

There are serious problems in his inferential analysis, however. To begin with, as mentioned above, Ārya Vimuktisena (in line with the Yogācāra tradition which formulated the concept of *svābhāvikakāya*) never identified the *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone, logically distinguished from gnosis. He identified it as the non-dual gnosis of universal emptiness or suchness. Haribhadra's summary of Ārya Vimuktisena's position, then, makes Ārya Vimuktisena into a straw man. This was probably not intentional. Steeped in the logical, Abhidharma, and Madhyamaka traditions of his time, Haribhadra could not accept *AA* chapter 8 for what it was, i.e. a direct mapping of Yogācāra tri-*kāya* buddhology onto the Large *PP sūtra*. And therefore he could not properly understand Ārya Vimuktisena, who did accept the *AA* that way. Haribhadra could only see *AA* 8 and Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation of it through the lens of his time, place, and tradition. As noted just above, Haribhadra's hermeneutic method involved a little philological evidence (discussed in chapter 8 above) and much inferential evidence (structured through the lens of the logico-Mādhyamika tradition of his time). Importantly, it did not involve historical-critical method. The result was that he could not even consider in his interpretation of *AA* 8 and Ārya Vimuktisena most of the historical-critical and comparative-textual considerations which have been raised throughout this thesis.

There is another major error in Haribhadra's inferential analysis which probably also stems from his lack of historical-critical method. He assumed that all could agree with him that a Buddha required a set of primary sense consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*) to carry out activity in the conditioned world. This was far from a generally accepted position in Mahāyāna Buddhism prior to Haribhadra. In fact, in the Yogācāra related textual traditions which formulated three *kāya* theory, precisely the opposite was assumed: a Buddha's activity was said to be entirely spontaneous and free of any conditioned forethought (see chapter 5, section 3 above). No primary consciousnesses or mental factors (a la the Abhidharma analysis of mind) were explicitly ascribed to a Buddha in such texts. Rather, it was implied that through a Buddha's non-dual realization of universal suchness, and from the force of his previous vows and collection of merit, conjoined with the karmic readiness of disciples, a Buddha's activity manifested entirely spontaneously within the conditioned world. Common metaphors used to illustrate this were the wish-fulfilling gem and heavenly drums of Indian legend, which performed their functions without any consciousnesses or mental factors whatsoever. To claim that various phenomenal consciousnesses and mental factors are required for such spontaneous enlightened activity is to run counter to the entire early Yogācāra tradition from which the *AA* drew its *kāya* terminology.

Haribhadra's ascription of primary consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*) to Buddha also ran counter to an important part of the Madhyamaka buddhological tradition prior to Haribhadra. Candrakīrti

(ca. 600-650 CE) explicitly stated in the *buddhabhūmi* chapter of his *Madhyamakāvatāra* that the gnosis of a Buddha was utterly free of primary consciousnesses and mental factors. In that text Candrakīrti raises the problem of how a Buddha can teach about the realization of thatness (*tattvam*, i.e. ultimate truth, emptiness) to the world when his own gnosis has become epistemologically one with the non-arising nature of thatness, which means that Buddha's gnosis itself is also "non-arising." Candrakīrti explains that the manifestation of the *rūpakāyas* and the words they teach are spontaneous, arising from the force of previous merit and by the blessing of the Buddha. He compares Buddha's activity to the wish-fulfilling gem of Indian folklore, because the Buddha, "without moving from the *dharmadhātu* for even a moment," spontaneously carries out the welfare of sentient beings in precise accord with their needs. This is through the force of the Buddha's prior vows and the karmic merit of the disciples. Candrakīrti then discusses the "*dharmakāya*." This is his term for the non-dual gnosis of thatness which is the first of his three *kāyas* (corresponding to the *svābhāvikakāya* of the Yogācāra tradition). He says that the *dharmakāya* totally "burns up the dry firewood of [all] objects of knowledge," from which there is the "non-arising of objects of knowledge," and through that the *dharmakāya* "comes to [cognitively] possess that non-arising" (i.e. to become epistemologically one with it). He concludes that, the gnosis of the *dharmakāya* being utterly focussed on

thatness (*tattvam*), no primary consciousnesses (*citta*) or mental factors (*caitta*) are operative in it.[26]

Haribhadra's assumption, then, that primary consciousnesses and mental factors make up a Buddha's mind appears to have been based more on Abhidharma tradition than on the Mahāyāna gnoseological and buddhological traditions which preceded him. It is in texts such as the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya* that the various consciousnesses and mental factors (of non-Buddhas) are set forth. Haribhadra's heavy dependence on Abhidharma thought would also explain why he gave so much more importance to the list of undefiled dharmas than did either the *PP sūtras* or the early Yogācāra texts discussed earlier. In Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, the undefiled dharmas were identified as *dharmakāya*. In both the *PP* and Yogācāra traditions, they were considered only a description of *dharmakāya* from a phenomenal point-of-view (i.e. from our point-of-view, not from the Buddha's), hence inadequate to capture its real essence. Haribhadra resurrects the list of undefiled dharmas, identifies it as a separate *kāya* (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) because (he says) it appears conventionally to Buddha himself, and thereby takes that list as an accurate conventional description of the way a Buddha's gnosis appears from the Buddha's *own* point-of-view.[27]

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26 *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Poussin edition, pp. 358-362.
27 On this, recall Haribhadra's comment above in his *Sphutārthā* (Amano 1983, fol. 24b3): "Differentiated in accordance with [different] mentalities, they [the three conventional *kāyas*] are established by being the cognitive objects for Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and *śrāvakas*, etc." This means *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* appears conventionally only to a Buddha's awareness (just as *sāmbhogikakāya* appears to *ārya*

In sum, Haribhadra's central independent argument for a four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 runs as follows: we can infer from a Buddha's activities in the world that a Buddha possesses a differentiated set of conditioned mental factors generating those activities (the undefiled dharmas). Therefore a separate *kāya* consisting of such mental factors (the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) has to be posited which is logically separate from *svābhāvikakāya* (*svābhāvikakāya* being just the unconditioned emptiness of those mental factors) and epistemologically separate on the conventional level from the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*. Since the Sanskrit versification of the *AA* permits honest persons to disagree on the meaning of its 8th chapter, such an independent inference is crucial toward its interpretation. For Maitreya (whom Haribhadra designates the author of the *AA*, Wogihara, p.1) was an infallible person, and would have said what we find it logical for him to have said.

This is Haribhadra's fundamental argument against the three *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* which was traditional prior to his time. As noted above, it contains two crucial mistaken assumptions, both of which probably stem from Haribhadra's lack of historical-critical method. First, he assumed that Ārya Vimuktisena (as a Mādhyamika) distinguished the *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone (distinct from gnosis). Quite the contrary was true. Ārya Vimuktisena, in line with the early Yogācāra tradition that formulated the theory of *svābhāvikakāya*, identified that *kāya* precisely as the non-dual gnosis of emptiness. And his description

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*bodhisattvas* and *nairmāṇikakāya* to lesser beings), and is therefore to be distinguished conventionally as a separate *kāya* for precisely this reason.

of that *kāya* as "uncreated" (i.e. unconditioned) carried the broad sense it usually carried in the early Yogācāra tradition, not the precise logical sense that Haribhadra read into it centuries later. Secondly, Haribhadra assumed that whoever accepted the existence of Buddha's activity in the world, had to agree that a Buddha possessed various sense consciousnesses and mental factors needed to generate such activity. He assumed, in other words, that all could agree with him that the general Abhidharma analysis of mind applied equally well to the special case of a Buddha's mind. But neither the early Yogācāra tradition (from which the *AA* drew its *kāya* terminology) nor Candrakīrti (a Mādhyamika of considerable weightiness) would have agreed with any such assumption. And, in all probability therefore, neither would have Ārya Vimuktisena. A Buddha's activity was frequently described as utterly spontaneous in three *kāya* texts, precisely to show how all aspects of buddhahood, including its activity, flowed out of the same essence: the perfected non-dual realization of suchness which pervaded the universe. The great emphasis in three *kāya* texts on the spontaneity of enlightened activity was intended precisely to show that buddhahood was free of any such mundane consciousnesses and mental factors as Haribhadra ascribed to it.[28]

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[28] At this point in his *Āloka*, (though not in his *Sphuṭārthā*) Haribhadra presents another hypothetical objection by a three *kāya* proponent, and his own rebuttal (Wogihara, p. 916, lines 18-22). He has the three *kāya* proponent paraphrase a half-verse from Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikās* (vs. 24.18), in which it is said: "Precisely that which is a dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpādaḥ*) you accept as emptiness (*śūnyatā*)." He then says that a three *kāya* proponent might claim, based on that half-verse, that the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) was implicitly presented (in the *AA*) in its teaching of the *dharmatākāya* (the *svābhāvikakāya*), since the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* is a dependent arising, which has been included as such with its emptiness, the *svābhāvikakāya*, in the presentation of the three *kāyas*. Haribhadra rebuts this by

Haribhadra, relying much on inference and less on philology, was evidently aware that his interpretation of *AA* 8 was especially vulnerable to attack on philological and textual grounds.[29] Next in his commentary, then, he presents the objection of a hypothetical three *kāya* proponent, who attacks Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation on textual grounds. Haribhadra then attempts to rebut the objection:

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saying that, based on the very same reason, the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* should also not have been taught separately (in the *AA*), since their emptiness is equally the *svābhāvikakāya*. Then, he says, the opponent might reply that the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were specified separately (in the *AA*) because they are mentioned in scripture (*pravacana*, traditional texts) and are posited through their conventional appearance to yogis. By the very same reason, he replies, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* is also to be specified separately. Again, he makes several bad assumptions in this line of argument. First, neither Ārya Vimuktisena nor the three *kāya* texts of the *AA's* period logically separated emptiness from gnosis to identify *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone (as Haribhadra has his opponents do). It is possible that some Mādhyamika scholars in Haribhadra's time propounded a three *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 based on a Mādhyamikaidentification of *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone. If so, Haribhadra's rebuttal could apply to them, but not to Ārya Vimuktisena, whose interpretation is surely the one to be reckoned with. Secondly, Haribhadra's final remark indicates he assumed that the collection of undefiled dharmas (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) appears conventionally as a collection of differentiated dharmas to a Buddha's own awareness, i.e. that a Buddha cognizes conventionalities qua conventionalities, not through the non-dual cognition of their suchness. This was not the position of those who formulated the theory of three *kāyas*, Ārya Vimuktisena, or Candrakīrti (see our discussion above on Haribhadra's ascription of primary consciousnesses and mental factors to a Buddha). Finally, Haribhadra's final remark also appears to have been based on the assumption that, like the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*, the collection of undefiled dharmas per se were identified as *dharmakāya* in traditional Buddhist scriptures. They were identified as such in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma (see chapter 2 above), but not in the *PP sūtras* upon which the *AA* is based, in any other Mahāyāna *sūtras* I am aware of, nor in the Yogācāra texts which first formalized a three *kāya* theory (see chapters 3-5 above).

29 See chapter 8 above, where textual and philological analysis of the *AA* establishes it as a three *kāya* text.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p.5, fols. 25a6-25a7]

> Some, [criticizing] the four *kāya* explanation, [quote *AA* vs. 1.17, the table of contents of *AA* chapter 8]:
> "*svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, and *nairmāṇika* as well,
> *dharmakāya*, with activity, proclaimed as four-fold."[30]
> In [this] verse, [they claim,] since the word "*dharmakāya*" is not said immediately after the word "*svābhāvika*," there are only three *kāyas*.
>
> But others [reply] that, on the strength of the intention just demonstrated, for felicity in the construction of the verse, and for the sake of associating activity with the gnosis alone, it was stated thusly. Therefore [the *AA*] is consistent with all the statements in other quarters (*pradeśāntara*) that the *kāyas* are four-fold.

In the first paragraph above, the proponent of the three *kāya* interpretation puts his objection. The terms which Haribhadra understood to designate four separate *kāyas* in *AA* chapter 8 appear in that chapter in the following order: "*svābhāvikakāya*" (*AA* vs. 8.1), "*dharmakāya*" (meaning *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, vs. 8.6), "*sāmbhogikakāya*" (vs. 8.12), "*nairmāṇikakāya*" (vs. 8.33). But the corresponding terms in *AA* vs. 1.17, the table of contents for chapter 8, appear in a different order: *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*, *dharmakāya*. This,

[30] I quote *AA* vs. 1.17 with four key words left in Sanskrit, so as to permit the kind of semantic ambiguity which Haribhadra read into the verse, without which his four *kāya* interpretation of it could not even be seriously entertained. An accurate English translation of the verse would read: "In its essence, with its enjoyment, and in its emanation as well, the *dharmakāya*, with its activity, is proclaimed as four-fold" (see chapter 8, section 2), which clearly teaches three *kāyas* with activity as four aspects of the resultant (inclusive) *dharmakāya*. If such a translation were presented above, however, because it takes philology too seriously, it would not leave Haribhadra the room he needs to argue that the verse teaches four *kāyas*. Haribhadra wants philosophers to find ambiguity where philologists would not. To accomodate him, I have tried to provide such ambiguity in the translation above.

Haribhadra has his opponents say, indicates that only three *kāyas* are taught in the *AA*. For if the term "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 designated a separate *kāya* (rather than serving as a synonym for "*svābhāvikakāya*" of vs. 8.1), then it should have appeared after the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" in vs. 1.17, the verse which sets forth the order of topics for chapter 8. In a three *kāya* interpretation of the text, the fact that "*dharmakāya*" appears last in vs. 1.17 indicates that it serves as the title of the chapter, not as the name of a fourth *kāya*.

In Haribhada's interpretation, *AA* vs. 1.17 specifies four separate *kāyas* by those four key terms. He therefore had to give reasons why the four *kāya* terms were presented in a different order in vs. 1.17 than in chapter 8. He gives three reasons. The first is "the strength of the intention just demonstrated" (*upadarśita-prayojana-sāmarthyāt*). Just prior to his remarks above, Haribhadra had presented his central argument for his four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* (Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-a6 quoted earlier]. There he argued from the acknowledgement of a Buddha's manifestations and activities in the world to the acceptance of his having a collection of mental factors, which, logically separate from *svābhāvikakāya* (as conventional and ultimate truth) and epistemologically separate from *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*, had to be posited as a fourth *kāya*. Given the assumption that the *AA* was teaching whatever was most reasonable, its ambiguities were to be resolved by reliance on this valid inference of four *kāyas*. This is the intention (*prayojana*) of the *AA* according to Haribhadra which he has just demonstrated by inference.

On "the strength" of that demonstrated (four *kāya*) intention behind the text, *AA* vs. 1.17 is to be interpreted as follows:

> "*svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, and *nairmāṇika* as well,
> *dharmakāya*, with activity, proclaimed as four-fold."
> *AA* vs. 1.17

The *svābhāvika[kāya]* is the *dharmatā* of buddhahood, the ultimate nature of all three other *kāyas*, hence it is presented first in the verse. The *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are a Buddha's manifestations, the evidence of his activities in the world. Therefore they appear next in the verse. All acknowledge that they appear in order to carry out a Buddha's activities. Based on that, all should acknowledge that a Buddha possesses the consciousnesses and mental factors necessary to generate such manifestations and act through them, i.e. the conventionally existent gnoses, the undefiled dharmas. Given that collection of conventional gnoses, a fourth *kāya*, the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya* must be posited. Therefore, the the term "*dharmakāya*" appears next in the verse. According to Haribhadra, the *AA's* author set forth the terms for the four *kāyas* in *AA* vs. 1.17 in the order he did precisely to indicate the rationale behind the teaching of four *kāyas*. But within the text of chapter 8 itself, the *AA's* author had to present the *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya* just after his presentation of *svābhāvikakāya*, since the latter is defined precisely as the innate nature of the undefiled dharmas which comprise the former. All this is contained in the first of Haribhadra's three reasons above for the

disparate order of terms in vs. 1.17: "on the strength of the intention just demonstrated."[31]

His second reason is "for felicity in the construction of the verse." This means that the *AA's* author did not put the term "*dharmakāya*" immediately after the term "*svābhāvika*" in vs. 1.17 because the numerous requirements of metre and syntax in the construction of Sanskrit verse precluded it. This sort of argument is very commonly used by Indian philosophers who want to propose an interpretation of a text which requires an unusual reading of it. It often has some merit, for the exigencies of Sanskrit metre do sometimes require ambiguous modes of expression which would not have occurred in prose. But the better composers of Sanskrit verse were remarkably adept at communicating their intentions and meanings clearly in spite of the difficulties. For this reason, any argument for a non-straightforward interpretation of a verse on the grounds that it had to be composed awkwardly, is prima facie a suspicious argument, often signaling a hidden agenda on the part of the interpreter, a desire to read something into the verse which it doesn't actually say. This is not always the case, but it is, of course, the case here.

The third reason Haribhadra gives for the disparate order of terms in vs. 1.17 is "for the sake of associating activity with the gnosis alone."

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[31] Tsong kha pa's analysis of Haribhadra's three reasons for the order of *kāya* terms in *AA* 1.17 appears in *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, 242a6 to 242b5. Tsong kha pa's understanding of the three reasons, I believe, is correct. And without seeing Tsong kha pa's commentary, it probably would never have dawned on me how much meaning Haribhadra had put into his very condensed expression.

This is related to the first reason above. According to Haribhadra, all of a Buddha's varied activities can only be based on his conventionally existent gnoses. The *svābhāvikakāya*, as emptiness, is a permanent, hence not a basis for conditioned activity. The *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are manifestations which must be generated by something more basic. And that is the collection of gnoses, the undefiled dharmas. These comprise the fundamental, impermanent and conditioned basis for all conditioned manifestations and enlightened activities, and as such are to be posited as a fourth *kāya*. Thus, in Haribhadra's view, gnosis and enlightened activity are closely associated in the *AA*, the conditioned gnosis being the primary cause of the activity, and the activity being the primary evidence for inferring such conditioned gnosis. For this reason, Haribhara is saying, the terms "*dharmakāya*" (meaning gnosis) and "*kāritra*" (activity) were placed adjacent to each other in verse 1.17.

The first and the third of Haribhadra's reasons above are, quite simply, brilliant. Some of our discussion in prior chapters of this thesis may have made Haribhadra look a bit shoddy as a scholar, since we had to point out where he had made philological and historical mistakes in his reading of *AA* 8. But if one considers the extent and depth of meaning which he put into his exceedingly brief remarks above, one has to be amazed. His reading of *AA* chapter 8, in the final analysis, is so brilliant and so profound, that it is no surprise that, in spite of all the philological and historical-critical problems involved in his interpretation, it became so enormously influential throughout Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and has remained so to the present day. After all, philological and historical-

critical issues were seldom as important to Indian and Tibetan yogi-philosophers as profundity of meaning, and the implications that meaning had for yogic and philosophical purposes.

Nevertheless, in spite of the sheer brilliance of Haribhadra's exposition of *AA* vs. 1.17 in its logical relation to the entire structure of *AA* buddhology, it is, technically speaking, not correct. I refer the reader to our analysis of verse 1.17 in chaper 8, section 2 above. Haribhadra ignored, in his discussion above, most of the evidence we presented there that vs. 1.17 taught three *kāyas*. He ignored the adjectival forms of four of the terms in the verse, and the singular number of the verb, all of which are in the proper case and number to modify only one noun: "*dharmakāyaḥ.*" This indicates that all adjectives in verse 1.17 ("*svābhāvika,*" "*sasāmbhogaḥ,*" "*nairmāṇikaḥ,*" and "*sakāritraḥ*") were intended as aspects of an inclusive, resultant "*dharmakāya,*" "*dharmakāya*" being the title of chapter 8. He ignored the fact that that precise term, "*dharmakāya*" is given as the title of chapter 8 in vs. 1.4. He ignored the evidence of vs. 9.2. And Haribhadra ignored the fact that, according to his interpretation, vs. 1.17 would become the only verse in the entire table of contents for the *AA* which does not give the title of its chapter (see chapter 8, section 2 above).[32]

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[32] One Tibetan scholar, who followed Haribhadra's interpretation of the *AA*, when faced with the evidence presented above that vs. 1.17's "*dharmakāya*" must refer to the title of *AA* 8 (*dharmakāyaphalam*), and that vs. 1.17 therefore teaches three *kāyas*, suggested an alternative to me. Defending Haribhadra, he said that the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 1.17 must refer simultaneously to both the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* (as Haribhadra claimed) and to the *dharmakāyaphalam* which includes all *kāyas* (which my evidence proved; Tsong kha pa makes the same move in his *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 226b3-5; see chapter 12 below). If that is the case, then "*dharmakāya*" in both senses is "proclaimed

Given this background, it is clear that the objection which Haribhadra put into the mouth of the three *kāya* proponent above was about the weakest philological objection to his own interpretation of the *AA* that he could think of. Because his four *kāya* interpretation is based so heavily on his own independent inference of what the *AA* should be saying, and is so little rooted in the expression of the text itself, he realized how vulnerable he was to objections on philological and textual grounds. And he tried to head them off by raising such an objection himself, albeit in the weakest form possible. Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* vs. 1.17 (and of the chapter for which it is the table of contents), then, while ingenious, is unquestionably philologically mistaken.

At the end of his remarks above, Haribhadra (late 8th century) says: "Therefore [the *AA*] is consistent with all the statements in other quarters that the *kāyas* are four-fold." The later Indian commentators Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE) and Abhayākaragupta (ca. 1100 CE) both assumed that by the expression "other quarters" (*pradeśāntara*) Haribhadra was referring to the Tantric Buddhist traditions. Later Tibetan commentators shared this assumption.[33] In several of the Indian

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as four-fold" in vs. 1.17. That would mean vs. 1.17 is proclaiming both *dharmakāya phalam* and *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* to have the four aspects indicated by the adjectival forms in the verse: *svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, *nairmāṇika*, and *sakāritra*. Then *dharmakāya phalam* would still be proclaimed in the verse to include just three *kāyas* plus activity ("*jñānātmaka*" is still not listed among its four aspects). And in addition, *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* would also be proclaimed to include three *kāyas* plus activity. The problems with Haribhadra's interpretation just proliferate the more one tries to defend it.

33 Ratnākaraśānti, *Śuddhamatī*, Pk 5199, fol. 281-4-7 to 281-5-1; Abhayākaragupta, *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fol. 232-5-5 to 232-5-6; cf. Tsong kha pa, *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fol. 224b2, 227a2-a3.

Buddhist Tantras and their manuals for initiation rites, yogic practise, etc., four Buddha *kāyas* are specified. And Buddhist Tantric practise was extremely prominent in and outside of the major Buddhist monastic universities of North India in Haribhadra's time (the Pāla period). Haribhadra's remark, then, probably meant that his four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* (a non-Tantric Buddhist text) conformed, at least formally, to the four *kāya* pattern established in the Tantric tradition. And this may, in fact, have comprised an adjunct reason for his reading of four *kāyas* into the *AA*.

Buddhist Tantric theory was centered on the notion of the yogi (or yoginī) patterning his yogic practise on the result which he was seeking to attain. In Buddhist Tantric practise, then, the various components of the practitioner's psycho-physical basis were brought into homologous alignment with visualized components of buddhahood, the final result of the practise. Within Tantric texts and commentaries, various components of buddhahood had to be differentiated which corresponded on the result level (buddhahood) to the various psycho-physical components of the basal level (the level of the not-yet-enlightened yogi/nī). This produced, in the Tantric system, four or five-fold patterns of buddhahood described sometimes as "*kāyas*" and aligned with four or five aspects of the basal level (e.g. the four or five principal nerve centers (*cakras*) of Indian physiology, the five skandhas, the four-fold karmic basis: body, speech, mind and their activity, etc.).

As discussed in chapters 4 and 5 above, however, the basic three *kāya* pattern of the early Yogācāra tradition (which surfaced in the *AA's* 8th

chapter) was formulated on a different basis. The three *kāya* pattern represented an extrapolation from early Yogācāra yogic practise and gnoseology to the concept of *svābhāvikakāya*, which was then related to *sūtra* descriptions of *dharmakāya* (as non-dual gnosis), exalted Buddha forms (identified as *sāmbhogikakāya*), and limitless emanations (identified as *nairmāṇikakāya*).

Ratnākaraśānti's interpretation of *AA* chapter 8 agreed with Ārya Vimuktisena's. He understood the *AA* to be another three *kāya* text which stood in the same (non-Tantric) tradition of yoga and gnoseology which had generated the three *kāya* theory in texts such as the *MSA*. As a scholar of Tantra himself, he also recognized that the four *kāyas* taught in Tantra derived from a very different theoretical and practical context than the three *kāyas* taught in the *MSA* or *AA*. Therefore, in one of his commentaries on the *AA*, the *Śuddhamatī*, Ratnākaraśānti severely criticizes Haribhadra for the comment above, in which he was understood by Ratnākaraśānti to have suggested that a four *kāya* reading of the *AA* also conformed to the Tantric tradition. Ratnākaraśānti says that the four *kāyas* in Tantra refer to the "body, speech and mind" of enlightenment, together with the "activity" (*karma*) or the "sameness" (samatā) of those three things. This, he says, is a totally different theoretical formulation than Haribhadra's four *kāya* reading of the *AA*, generated by a different context and purpose.[34] In Ratnākaraśānti's view, the teaching of three *kāyas* in the *AA* had its own special significance (related to the kind of

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34 *Śuddhamatī*, Pk 5199, fols. 281-4-6 to 281-5-2.

yogic practise and gnoseology discussed in chapters 4 and 5 above), and this was only obfuscated by Haribhadra's attempt to read four *kāyas* into the text.

Abhayākaragupta, another late Indian scholar steeped in the traditions of *Pāramitānāya* (non-Tantric Buddhism based on the *sūtras*) and *Mantranāya* (Tantric Buddhism), differed from Ratnākaraśānti. He believed that a four *kāya* description of buddhahood like Haribhadra's was indeed a part of the Tantric tradition. And he thought that Haribhadra had borrowed his four *kāya* theory from Tantric Buddhism and had then applied it inappropriately by reading it into the *AA* (a *Pāramitānāya* text).[35] More will be said about the views of both these scholars in the following chapter.

In the next portion of his *Sphuṭārthā*, Haribhadra quotes and comments upon *AA* vss. 8.7-8.8:

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, pp. 5-7, fols. 25a8-25b6]

> That being so, in order to show the superiority of a Buddha's meditative power freeing from passions (*araṇāsamādhi*) over that of the disciples (*śrāvakas*), etc., the following verse (*AA* vs. 8.7) is said:
> "A disciple's meditative power freeing from passions is the avoidance of men's passions [arising] from seeing [that disciple]. The Victor's [Buddha's] meditative power freeing from passions is for cutting off the stream of their passions in towns, etc."
> *AA* vs. 8.7
> Having thought, "May there be no arising of passions in anyone because of seeing me," the arising of passions in people is

[35] *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fol. 232-5-5 to 232-5-6.

avoided. [This is] the meditative power of the disciples (*śrāvakas*), etc. which frees from passions. But the *tathāgatas'* meditative power freeing from passions is such that there is the eradication of the continua of passions of all the sentient beings in towns, etc.

In order to explain the superiority of a Buddha's gnosis [resulting from] resolve (*praṇidhijñāna*) over that of the disciples, etc., the following verse is said:

"It is accepted that the Buddha gnosis [resulting from] resolve is automatic, unattached, unobstructed, forever operative, and answers all questions." *AA* vs. 8.8

Through its freedom from signs (*nimitta*), it operates of its own accord. Because it is free from adherence to things, it is free from attachment to forms, etc. Because it has abandoned the moral and cognitive obstructions (*kleśajñeyāvaraṇa*) together with their propensities, it is unobstructed with reference to all objects of knowledge. Because it remains for as long as cyclic existence lasts (*saṃsāra*), it is forever operative. Because it has obtained the analytical knowledges, it provides answers to the questions. Such is accepted for the *tathāgata's* gnosis [resulting from] resolve. Since that of the disciples, etc. is just the reverse, it is not like [a Buddha's].

Earlier it was mentioned that the gnoseology and buddhology of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism had outgrown the list of undefiled dharmas by the time the *AA* was composed. That list was woefully inadequate to communicate the all-encompassing gnostic qualities of a Buddha as they were already being articulated in texts such as the *MSA*. But it was retained as an historical survival within Mahāyāna traditions, and viewed as a valid description of buddhahood from a limited, phenomenal point-of-view (see chapter 4, section 2 above). The *AA's* textual basis in the *PP sūtra* required it to give that list of undefiled dharmas a prominent place in its exposition of *svābhāvikakāya*. But its author, probably sensing the need to do some reinterpretation, singled out two of the undefiled

dharmas, i.e. two of the gnostic qualities of buddhahood, in order to indicate the limitless capacities of a Buddha's gnosis according to contemporary Mahāyāna buddhology. Particularly in its description of Buddha's *praṇidhijñāna* as "automatic" (i.e. utterly spontaneous), "unobstructed" (i.e. all-pervasive), and "forever operative," the *AA* ascribed to Buddha's gnosis as a whole the powerful and all-encompassing properties ascribed to it in the Mahāyāna gnoseology of the time. After the remarks above, in the corresponding portion of his *Āloka*, Haribhadra notes that the *araṇāsamādhi* and the *praṇidhijñāna* were separated out in *AA* 8 to serve as paradigms for the ways in which all the other undefiled dharmas are far superior to that of the disciples, etc.[36]

Haribhadra's commentary continues with explanation of *AA* vss. 8.9-8.11.

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 6, fols. 25b2-25b4]

> If [Buddha] always abides as *dharmakāya* with a nature of great compassion, why isn't the welfare [of beings] always being accomplished? In order to respond to this, the following verse is said:
> "When the cause has reached fruition, whenever and for whomever there is benefit to be accomplished, then and there he appears." *AA* vs. 8.9
> With Buddha, etc. as a basis, through meeting one's spiritual guide, and so forth, the cause (i.e. the seed, the root of virtue planted in the past) reaches maturity. Then, any time the teaching of dharma, etc. would have long term benefit for any such being, in order to benefit that being, the Bhagavat, by the fulfilment of his previous resolutions, accomplishes beneficial

36 Wogihara, p. 917, lines 17-19.

activity through a manifestation appropriate for that [very being at that very time]. But although he always abides nearby in the manner of a wish-fulfilling gem, [if] due to one's own karmic faults, the causes [for his manifestation to oneself] are incomplete, then [Buddha], who bestows their result, does not manifest. That is the purport [of the verse].

How is that so? An example is given by the following verse: "But even when the god of rain pours down rain, an infertile seed does not sprout. So even when Buddhas arise, one who is unfit does not obtain the blessedness." *AA* vs. 8.10

Even when the king of gods is showering down rain, a seed such as a sesame which, being rotten, is infertile, does not sprout forth. Likewise, even when Buddhas arise who are expert at fulfilling all wishes, one without [karmic] fortune does not obtain the blessedness, i.e. the hearing of the holy dharma, etc.

How can the *dharmakāya* consisting of gnosis (*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) be called "pervasive" (*vyāpī*) and "permanent" (*nitya*) when it exists within the mental continuum of each yogi [Buddha] individually, and is produced (*utpadyamānaḥ*) moment by moment? [An answer is provided] by the following verse: "Because of such extensiveness of activity, Buddha is declared to be pervasive. And because of his inexhaustibility (*akṣayatvāt*), he is called permanent." *AA* vs. 8.11

In the manner just indicated [in verses 8.8-8.10 above], Buddha is called "pervasive"(*vyāpī*) because of the extensiveness of the activity which he carries out through his universal manifestations, and he is called "permanent" (*nitya*) because the Bhagavat has no diminution, his continuity remaining for as long as cyclic existence lasts.

From our historical-critical perspective on the *AA*, we would say that *AA* vss. 8.9-8.11 continue to update the description of Buddha's gnosis to contemporary Mahāyāna buddhology, where *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is understood to be all-encompassing and universally accessible. *AA* vs. 8.11 refers back to vss. 8.8-8.10. In vs. 8.8, Buddha's gnosis was described as all-pervasive and forever operative. In vss. 8.9-8.10, the pervasiveness of Buddha's activity (based on such gnosis) was described.

Vs. 8.11, then, focusses on those two themes: the pervasiveness and permanence (or eternality) of buddhahood. In fact, vs. 8.11 follows the Yogācāra pattern (discussed in chapter 5, sections 3-5 above) of characterizing the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as pervasive, in its gnosis and manifestation, and permanent, in the general sense applicable both to the gnosis and to its manifestations (see chapter 5, section 5 above).[37]

Haribhadra noted the way in which vs. 8.11 referred back to earlier verses. And in his comments above, he shrewdly draws a special connection between vs. 8.11 and 8.8. Haribhadra wants to interpret all verses from 8.2 through 8.11 to concern what he has identified as the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* alone, the conventional, conditioned (and therefore impermanent) gnosis based upon which a Buddha's activity pervades the conditioned world. Vs. 8.8 described Buddha's gnosis as "forever operative" (*sadā sthitaṃ*). Haribhadra plausibly glossed this as: "Because it remains for as long as cyclic existence lasts, it is forever operative." Such a gloss permits his understanding of the gnosis as conditioned and impermanent, while also permitting its description as "permanent" in the sense of eternal, or unceasing.

Above, Haribhadra says that vs. 8.11, in part, serves as the *AA's* answer to the question of how *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* can be called "permanent" when it is changing moment by moment (*pratikṣaṇam*

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37 In chapter 5, section 5 above, we noted the way in which Yogācāra *śāstras* ascribed permanence to buddhahood as a whole, where the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* itself was understood to be permanent "by nature," while its manifestation as *sāmbhogikakāya* and the continuity of its manifestations as *nairmāṇikakāya* were understood to be permanent in the sense of never ceasing.

*utpadyamānaḥ*). This very question emphasizes the conditioned and momentary nature of the gnosis, an important part of Haribhadra's rationale for positing it as a separate *kāya*. Then, in his comment on vs. 8.11, he characterizes *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* in the following terms: "he is called 'permanent' because the Bhagavat has no diminution, his continuity remaining for as long as cyclic existence lasts." The expression "remaining for as long as cyclic existence lasts" echoes from his earlier comment on vs. 8.8, to become a very specific tag for Buddha's gnosis, characterizing it (in its moment by moment impermanence) as never ceasing, and thus as the conditioned basis for never-ceasing activity. In this manner, Haribhadra interprets vss. 8.7 through 8.11 as a block to concern Buddha's gnosis and the way that it serves as a basis for activity. And this identifies vss. 8.2-8.11 together as a unified explication of *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, which (according to Haribhadra) must be logically distinguished from *svābhāvikakāya* (a permanent) precisely because it serves as the conditioned, impermanent basis of a Buddha's conditioned activity.

Haribhadra next identifies the subject of *AA* vs. 8.12 as *sāmbhogikakāya*, the third *kāya* of his interpretation:

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 7, fol. 25b7]

> Having thus presented the second *kāya* [i.e. the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*], the third one is taught, the *sāmbhogikakāya* (Shared Enjoyment Body) which blazes with the marks and signs, and which is by nature a body of form:

> "This, having the character of the thirty-two marks and eighty signs, is considered [to be] the Body of the Sage in its Shared Enjoyment (*sāmbhogikakāya*), because of its enjoyment of the great vehicle (*mahāyāna*)." AA vs. 8.12
>
> Because it partakes in the pleasure and happiness of sharing the enjoyment of the utterly impeccable Mahāyāna dharma in company with the great bodhisattvas who have entered into the ten stages (*bhūmis*), it is the Shared Enjoyment Body (*sāmbhogikakāya*) of the Buddha, the Bhagavat, whose nature is the thirty-two marks and eighty signs.

This is self explanatory. For discussion of the textual and historical significance of this verse, which, for the first time in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism specifically assigns the marks and signs to the *sāmbhogikakāya* and makes them a part of its definition, see chapter 8, section 4 above. As in chapter 8 above, vss. 8.13 through 8.32 will not be discussed here. They and Haribhara's commentary on them describe in detail each mark and sign and a few of their causes, which are not directly relevant to our concerns.

We continue Haribhadra's commentary with his remarks on *AA* vss. 8.33-8.40. We will not translate all of his remarks, since most of them detail each of the twenty seven types of Buddha activity, which, again, are not specifically relevant to our concerns. We will, however, translate his remarks on vs. 8.33, his prologue to vss. 8.34-8.40, and his concluding remark on those verses. First, he separates vs. 8.33 from all the verses which follow it in order to comment on it individually as the *AA's* teaching of *nairmāṇikakāya*. Then, he gives a prologue to vss. 8.34-8.40 which explicitly ascribes all the activities listed in those verses to the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* (not to the *nairmāṇikakāya* of vs. 8.33). Then

he quotes vss. 8.34-8.40, and explains each of the twenty-seven types of activity. And finally, he concludes with a reaffirmation that all activities belong to the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, by asserting that the activities, like the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* upon which they are based, last as long as cyclic existence:

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, pp. 12-13, fols. 27b3-27b7]

> Having thus presented the third *kāya* [i.e. the *sāmbhogikakāya*], the fourth one is taught, the *nairmāṇikakāya* (Emanation Body), which [appears] in common to all ordinary beings:
> "The *nairmāṇikakāya* of the Sage is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world]."
> *AA* vs. 8.33
> That which, through forms such as Śākyamuni's, carries out the desired benefit of beings in all realms of the universe equally for as long as cyclic existence lasts, is the *nairmāṇikakāya* of the Buddha, the Bhagavat. It is uninterrupted because of its continuousness.
>
> Thus have the three [conventional] *kāyas* been presented, which are produced from the force of meditational practise, whose [ultimate] nature is the *svābhāvikakāya*, and which, by being [different] cognitive objects for Buddhas, [bodhisattvas], [*śrāvakas*], etc., are designated in dependence on [Buddha's] gnosis (*jñānam*), etc. Conventionally the gnosis alone carries out the activities through its generation of manifestations as *sāmbhogikakāya*, etc. Thus, the activities for trainees through [those] manifestations, which occur based upon the power of that [gnosis], belong to the *dharmakāya* [consisting of gnosis]. With this sense, it is said:

"Likewise, it is agreed, its activity (*karma*) is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: the activity which pacifies the states of rebirth, which establishes [beings] in the fourfold means of collecting [disciples]," *AA* vs. 8.34
"which establishes (*niveśanaṃ*) them in the comprehension of affliction and purification, in the proper nature of the welfare of beings, and in the six perfections," *AA* vs. 8.35
"which establishes them in the Buddha path, in the emptiness of intrinsic nature, in non-duality, in conventional symbolization (*saṃkete*), in non-perception, and in the maturing of embodied beings," *AA* vs. 8.36
"which establishes them in the bodhisattva path, in preventing adherence [to things], in the attainment of enlightenment (*bodhi*), in the purity of a Buddha's realm, in definite destiny," *AA* vs. 8.37
"which establishes them in the welfare of limitless beings, in the excellence of attending upon and devoting onesself to the Buddhas, in the limbs of enlightenment, in the non-wastefulness of deeds (*karma*), and in the vision of the truths," *AA* vs. 8.38
"which establishes them in the elimination of false views, in the method of [ascertaining] the baselessness of those [views], in purification and its accompanying accumulation, in the knowledge of non-distinction between conditioned and unconditioned," *AA* vs. 8.39
"and which establishes them [finally] in *nirvāṇa*. This is regarded as the twenty-sevenfold activity of the *dharmakāya*." *AA* vs. 8.40

At this point, Haribhadra explains each of the twenty-seven types of activity listed in those verses. After explicating each of the twenty-seven types, he concludes his commentary on *AA* chapter 8 with the words:

*Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, p. 14, fol. 28a4]

Thus, it is agreed, like the *dharmakāya*, its twenty-sevenfold activity [operates] for as long as cyclic existence lasts.

We noted in chapter 8 above that *AA* vss. 8.33-8.34 read straightforwardly in the Sanskrit as a description of the *nairmāṇikakāya* and its activity. If the verses are read together, which is of course how they appear in the *AA*, this seems clear. Here are the verses together:

> "The *nairmāṇikakāya* of the Sage is that through which he impartially carries out the various benefits for the world. It is uninterrupted for as long as the existence [of the world]."
> *AA* vs. 8.33
> "Likewise, it is agreed, its activity (*karma*) is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: the activity which pacifies the states of rebirth, which establishes [beings] in the fourfold means of collecting [disciples], ..." *AA* vs. 8.34

The antecedent of "its activity" in vs. 8.34 is clearly the *nairmāṇikakāya* of vs. 8.33 (see chapter 8, section 5 above). Ārya Vimuktisena's (and our) three-*kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 accorded with this. It was an established pattern in Yogācāra buddhology contemporaneous to the composition of the *AA* to identify a Buddha's extensive activity with the *nairmāṇikakāya* (see chapter 5, section 5 above), and Ārya Vimuktisena, reading the *AA* as a Yogācāra mapping onto the *PP sūtra*, and also reading the Sanskrit verses accurately, saw that Yogācāra pattern in them. He therefore straightforwardly read *AA* vss. 8.1-8.11 as explication of *svābhāvikakāya*, vss. 8.12-8.32 as explication of *sāmbhogikakāya*, and vss. 8.33-8.40 as explication of *nairmāṇikakāya*. He saw how vss. 8.1, 8.12, and 8.33 linked the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively to their corresponding *PP sūtra* passages, and how the other

verses then discussed the content of those *sūtra* passages and other issues raised by Yogācāra buddhology. He recognized, therefore, that vs. 8.33 linked the Yogācāra *nairmāṇikakāya* to *PP sūtra* passage VIII 5's description of numerous altruistic activities, and that vss. 8.34-8.40 then described its activities. He also accurately noted that the final half-verse of *AA* chapter 8, vs. 8.40b, concluded the chapter by referring to its entire content. Vs. 8.40b, by saying "the twenty-seven fold activity of the [resultant] *dharmakāya*," referred simultaneously to the activity of the final seven verses, and to the resultant *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāya phalam* of vss. 1.17 and 9.2), composed of all three *kāyas*, which are the subject matter of the rest of the chapter. In Ārya Vimuktisena's (and our) view, then, *AA* vss. 8.34-8.40 inclusive were teaching enlightened activity as it is carried out by the *nairmāṇikakāya* (which is the agent of the resultant *dharmakāya*). In this view, the *AA* was not (as Haribhadra claimed) newly positing a fourth *kāya*, a "*jñānātmaka dharmakāya*," as the conditioned basis of the activity (see chapter 6, chapter 8 and the final pages of chapter 9 above for Ārya Vimuktisena's and our own analyses of *AA* 8 as summarized here).

In Haribhadra's interpretation, the new *kāya* which he reads into the *AA*, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, must be posited precisely because, in his view, it is the conditioned source for a Buddha's activity. The relation between Buddha's activity and *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* is fundamental to him. As noted above, he argued that Buddha's conditioned gnosis alone was the source of the activity, and the activity was the primary evidence for inferring such conditioned gnosis. For Haribhadra, then, the phrase

"*dharmakāya sakāritra*" (*dharmakāya* with activity) of vs. 1.17 expressed this relation. And the phrase "*dharmakāyasya karma*" ("the activity of the *dharmakāya*) in vs. 8.40 above has the same meaning. Therefore, in his view, vss. 8.34-8.40, are to be understood to teach Buddha's activity as it is based upon his conditioned gnosis, his *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, referred to in vs. 8.40 as "*dharmakāya.*" He thus makes *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* the agent of the activity described in vss. 8.34-8.40 inclusive.

Again, Haribhadra's interpretation would not appear reasonable to philologists who read the Sanskrit vss. straightforwardly, because vss. 8.33 and 8.34, read together, support Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation (by making "*nairmāṇikakāya*" in vs. 8.33 the antecedent of "its activity" in vs. 8.34). Therefore, the first thing Haribhadra had to do was to separate those two verses, to make a distance between them in which to insert his perspective, in the hope that his readers would then project his perspective into the following verses. Therefore, after his explanation of vs. 8.33 (on *nairmāṇikakāya*) above, he presents again his rationale for positing the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* (a fourth *kāya*) as the only conditioned basis for enlightened activity. He reiterates that the *svābhāvikakāya* is the ultimate nature of all other *kāyas*, i.e. their emptiness (which is unconditioned). The activities are carried out by conditioned manifestations. The source of the activity, then, is not the manifestations themselves (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*), but the conditioned gnosis which gives rise to them, the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*. In other words, he repeats his earlier inference of a *kāya* logically separate from *svābhāvikakāya* (as conventional truth is distinct from ultimate

truth), conditioned (while *svābhāvikakāya* is unconditioned), and epistemologically distinct from *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* (being the conventional object only of Buddhas). Only then does he let the reader read vs. 8.34: "Likewise, it is agreed, its activity is uninterrupted for as long as cyclic existence lasts: ...." He has made the antecedent of the phrase "its activity" into the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* that he has just explained.

Haribhadra closes his remarks at the end of the chapter with the statement: "Thus, it is agreed, like the *dharmakāya*, its twenty-seven fold activity [operates] for as long as cyclic existence lasts (*ā saṃsāram*)." This makes vss. 8.34-8.40 into a teaching on the activity of buddhahood as it is based on the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*. The phrase Haribhadra uses here, "for as long as cyclic existence lasts," echoes back to us from his comments on vs. 8.11 above. There the phrase was specifically used to characterize Buddha's gnosis, even in its momentary nature, as unceasing, and hence, as the conditioned basis for unceasing, pervasive activity. Again, he has brilliantly woven his interpretation into the verses of the *AA*.

## 4. Concluding Remarks

It is worth reviewing the historical circumstances which prepared the way for Haribhadra's buddhology. The *AA's* 8th chapter, as we have seen, was a unique product created by mapping the three *kāya* theory of

Yogācāra onto the Large *PP sūtra*. *AA* chapter 8, therefore, naturally became the basis of later controversy, for it could not be read easily as a simple expression of either of the traditions from which it was composed. It was constrained by its textual basis in the *PP sūtra* to characterize buddhahood in ways never previously done in the Mahāyāna traditions of its time. In its definition of the *svābhāvikakāya*, for example, it gave the collection of undefiled dharmas a central position, which the Yogācāra tradition had not done. In its definition of *sāmbhogikakāya* , the marks and signs were given a new prominent position. And it made the extensive activities (described at great length in the *PP sūtra*) into one of four fundamental aspects of buddhahood, also a new formulation.

Ārya Vimuktisena managed an accurate interpretation of the chapter by paying careful attention to both of the textual traditions out of which it had been composed. But from Haribhadra's 8th century viewpoint, *AA* chapter 8's emphasis on the collection of undefiled dharmas and on activity as a primary category of buddhahood was best understood through his new, four *kāya* analysis. This analysis was intended to logically sort out the conditioned aspects of buddhahood (the undefiled dharmas, gnosis) from the unconditioned aspects (emptiness), and thereby to account for the activity of buddhahood in the conditioned world. In other words, it was intended to make sense of the fundamental Mahāyāna concept of non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, according to which buddhahood was paradoxically both beyond the conditioned world (unconditioned) and active within it (conditioned). Since the *AA's* unique mode of expression gave a prominent place both to the undefiled dharmas and to the activity

of buddhahood, it served as the perfect textual basis for Haribhadra's logical agenda.

Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA*, then, represented his application of the logic and Mādhyamika thought of his time to the textual material of the *AA*. As a product of late 8th century Buddhist logic and Mādhyamika analysis, it comprised a new theory of buddhahood within the Indian Mahāyāna traditions of *sūtra* and *śāstra*. But, because his theory was imbedded within his interpretation of the *AA*, later Indian and Tibetan scholars saw the theory and the interpretation as one. In fact, those who later accepted his four *kāya* theory in India and Tibet could not recognize it as a new historical development. In their view, Haribhadra's four *kāya* analysis just represented an accurate interpretation of the *AA*, a text of the highest authority, authored by Maitreya himself. And an accurate interpretation of what Maitreya had said centuries earlier could not be understood to be a new theory.[38]

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[38] Some later Tibetan scholars endorsed Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 (because they accepted his inferential arguments), and then projected his four *kāya* view back into all earlier Mahāyāna traditions. Such scholars did not notice that Haribhadra had misrepresented Ārya Vimuktisena's position, because they perceived Ārya Vimuktisena and the entire corpus of three *kāya* discussion prior to Haribhadra through Haribhadra's representation of them. In accord with Haribhadra's account, they believed that Ārya Vimuktisena had identified *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone (distinct from gnosis), and since it made no sense to insist that the gnosis (as a separate *kāya*) should not be logically distinguished from such a *svābhāvikakāya*, they concluded that Ārya Vimuktisena also privately accepted the four *kāya* formulation of buddhahood. They therefore claimed that Haribhadra's and Ārya Vimuktisena's disagreement over *AA* 8 only concerned the wording of the *AA*: i.e. whether its verses explicitly teach four *kāyas* or explicitly teach three *kāyas*. According to this view, Ārya Vimuktisena had argued only that the *AA* taught three *kāyas* explicitly, while privately accepting that it taught four implicitly (Se ra rje btsun chos gyi rgyal mtshan, *Chos sku phyi don*, fols. 35a4ff. Earlier Tibetan followers of Haribhadra, such as Tsong kha pa and rGyal tsab dar ma rin chen, never made that specific claim). Such a claim issues from a perspective which sees the entire history of Mahāyāna buddhology through Haribhadra's late 8th century point-of-

It appears, however, that it took some time before Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 became accepted in India (this will be discussed in the next chapter). But because Haribhadra's *AA* commentaries (his *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā*) as a whole were so clear, in-depth, and masterful, he was soon generally acknowledged as the greatest Indian *AA* commentator, and his interpretations of the entire *AA*, including its 8th chapter, became increasingly influential in late Indian Buddhism and even more influential in Tibet. Eventually in Tibet, Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* was accepted as the fundamental manual for study of the *AA*, and the most significant Tibetan *AA* commentators, even those who did not agree with all of Haribhadra's views, composed their treatises as sub-commentaries to his *Sphuṭārthā*.[39]

view. The fact is that the Mahāyāna buddhological traditions prior to and contemporaneous with the *AA* had never separated Buddha's gnosis from the suchness it non-dually cognized in order to formulate a separate "*dharmakāya*" consisting of gnosis alone, and Ārya Vimuktisena was clearly following those traditions. This is one example of the way in which too much veneration of one commentator (Haribhadra), even when he is an excellent one, can utterly distort one's understanding of earlier textual traditions by distorting the historical record.

[39] e.g. Bu ston rin chen grub, gYag ston sangs rgyas dpal, Rong ston shes bya kun rig, Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge, rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen, Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje, Śākya mchog ldan, etc.

# CHAPTER XI

# REACTIONS OF SOME IMPORTANT LATER INDIAN SCHOLARS TO HARIBHADRA'S FOUR KĀYA THEORY

It is not our purpose here to summarize the content of all other Indian commentaries on *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8. Several of them deserve a careful study, and perhaps a monograph, in their own right. In this chapter we will briefly outline those later Indian Buddhist reactions to Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 which, in our view, are most historically significant, focussing especially on those lines of interpretation which became most important in both later Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. Of all the *AA* commentaries mentioned below, only Ratnākaraśānti's *Sāratamā* is extant in Sanskrit. The other commentaries by Buddhajñānapāda, Dharmamitra, Prajñākaramati, Buddhaśrījñāna, Kumāraśrībhadra, Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta, although composed in Sanskrit, are presently extant only in their Tibetan translation in the Tibetan canon.

1. Buddhajñānapāda

The *Saṃcayagāthā-pañjikā*, a commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā-ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā* extant only in the Tibetan canon, is ascribed to a Buddhaśrījñāna (Pk 5196). The same author is identified by Bu ston and 'Gos lo tsa ba gzhon nu dpal as "Buddhajñānapāda," who was generally identified in Tibet as an important disciple of Haribhadra's (which would also date him to the late 8th century). As the founder of the Jñānapāda lineage of the Guhyasamāja tradition, he was recognized in Tibet as one of the foremost Vajrayāna masters.[1]

Buddhjñānapāda's commentary analyzes the *Saṃcayagāthā* in its logical relation to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. The section of it which corresponds to *AA* chapter 8 is of special interest to us. Because Buddhjñānapāda may well have been Haribhadra's disciple, what he says about *AA* chapter 8 becomes historically significant. Does his own commentary accord with his master's four *kāya* formulation, or not?

Interestingly, it does not. In Buddhjñānapāda's interpretation of *AA* chapter 8, there are again three, not four *kāyas*. In addition, Buddhjñānapāda draws heavily upon Yogācāra gnoseology in his formulation of those three *kāyas*. He identifies *AA* 8's *svābhāvikakāya* as the mirror gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*) of a Buddha (mirror gnosis being the most fundamental of the four Buddha gnoses delineated in Yogācāra texts; see chapter 5, sec. 4 above). He says the *svābhāvikakāya* is to be

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[1] Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, p. 102.

"characterized as mirror gnosis because it is ever the one non-conceptual essence (*rnam par mi rtog pa'i ngo bo nyid, nirvikalpasvabhāva*) of the Bhagavans." He then proceeds to identify the *sāmbhogikakāya* as Buddha's gnoses of equality (*samatājñāna*) and examination (*pratyavekṣājñāna*), and the *nairmāṇikakāya* as Buddha's gnosis which accomplishes activity (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*). He also aligns these three *kāyas* and four Buddha gnoses with the fundamental transformation of the eight consciousnesses posited in the Yogācāra tradition (*ālayavijñāna*, etc.).[2] In his final remark on *AA* chapter 8's resultant *dharmakāya*, he says: "... through the force of his gnosis of *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* (the purified realm of universal suchness) he cognizes all phenomena, both defiled and purified, in their undifferentiated nature."[3] This remark, too, assumes the kind of gnoseology which underlay the original formulation of three *kāyas*, and which rationalized its adoption by scholars such as Ārya Vimuktisena and Candrakīrti (see chapter 4; chapter 5, sec. 4; and chapter 9, sec. 2 above).

If Buddhajñānapāda was in fact Haribhara's disciple, the fact that he referred back to the earlier three *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 and followed it, rather than following Haribhadra's interpretation, is significant. There would be two possibilities: either Buddhajñānapāda composed his *Saṃcayagāthā-pañjikā* prior to Haribhadra's composition of his main *AA* treatises (the *Sphuṭārthā* and the *Āloka*), or he composed it after

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[2] *Saṃcayagāthāpañjikā*, Pk 5196, fols. 152-5-6 to 153-1-4. See also chapter 5, sec. 4 above.
[3] ibid., fol. 153-1-5 to 6.

Haribhadra's treatises. If Buddhajñānapāda composed his commentary before Haribhadra's, it would tend to indicate that the three *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 which he followed was still the prevailing view right up to Haribhadra's time. And this would further indicate that Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation was indeed innovative. If Buddhajñānapāda composed his commentary after Haribhadra's main *AA* treatises (as seems most likely, the former being the reputed disciple of the latter), it would be even more significant. For it would mean that Haribhadra's own disciple parted company with him on his interpretation of *AA* chapter 8. And this could indicate that Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 was not immediately accepted in later Indian Buddhism, and that it took some time for it to become somewhat established and accepted. Further evidence for the latter possibility is provided by Dharmamitra's *AA* commentary, to which we now turn.

2. Dharmamitra

Dharmamitra was the author of an important sub-commentary on Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* called the *Prasphuṭapadā* (Pk 5194). Dharmamitra's text is meant to serve as an explanation of Haribhadra's interpretations, to clarify Haribhadra's views, rather than as an independent treatise of his own. He is thought to have lived in roughly the same period as Haribhadra (late 8th century to early 9th century), and this would mean that his *Prasphuṭapadā* provides the first attempt in

Indian Buddhism to comprehend and explain Haribhadra's new interpretation of *AA* 8.[4] For the most part, Dharmamitra did an incisive job. But his commentary is especially revealing in certain places where he completely misinterprets what Haribhadra had said. It seems that Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 was too novel to be fully comprehended by Dharmamitra. And this gives further indication of how innovative Haribhadra's views were. Dharmamitra's remarks also give us an indication of just how unsettled Mahāyāna buddhology was in the late 8th and early 9th century when he lived. Many different interpretations of *AA* 8 and the Buddha *kāyas* were evidently much debated in his time. And Haribhadra's four *kāya* explanation was apparently not immediately accepted.

Dharmamitra correctly identifies Haribhadra's primary distinction between *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* and *svābhāvikakāya* to be a logical distinction between *dharmī* and *dharmatā*, i.e. between a qualified thing (the undefiled dharmas) and the quintessential quality of that thing (their emptiness, *paramārtha satya*). He also correctly points out that the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya* were distinguished by Haribhadra by reference to the types of persons for whom each conventionally appears: Buddhas, bodhisattvas and the spiritually less mature respectively (although, unlike Haribhadra, Dharmamitra explicitly identifies *sāmbhogikakāya* as a conventional appearance for bodhisattvas of the tenth *bhūmi* alone). Dharmamitra

[4] On Dharmamitra's probable date, see Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, p. 102.

makes many interesting buddhological and gnoseological observations throughout his commentary which deserve careful study, but it is not our present purpose to discuss them at length.

In one very interesting portion of his commentary, Dharmamitra becomes utterly confused about Haribhadra's meaning. Haribhadra, in his *Sphuṭārthā*, after discussing the twenty-one types of undefiled *dharma* (which he identifies as *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*), presented a hypothetical debate between himself and proponents of three *kāyas*. In Amano, 1983, the debate runs from folios 25a4 to 25a7 (see chapter 10, sec. 2 above). Haribhadra's hypothetical debate runs as follows. The numbering of the paragraphs will be explained below:

Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā* - [Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-25a7]

> (1) According to some, the *dharmakāya* is explained as all of those [undefiled] dharmas, the factors fostering enlightenment, etc., consisting of gnosis free from discursive conceptualization, utterly transformed through basal transformation (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*).
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> (2) But, others explain that: "The undefiled dharmas which have obtained purity in all respects, the *svābhāvikakāya* of the Sage has their innate nature as its characteristic" (*AA* vs. 8.1), literally means that, it being agreed upon that the supramundane undefiled dharmas [are the Buddha's gnosis], the *svābhāvikakāya* is what possesses their innate nature (*prakṛti*), non-arisingness (*anutpādatā*), as its property. And it [the *svābhāvikakāya*] is also the *dharmatākāya*, this being indicated by [the concluding word of vs. 8.6]:"*dharmakāya*," through the ellision of the particle that indicates abstract nouns ("-*tā*"). Then they [raise the hypothetical] question: "What are those undefiled dharmas, the innate nature of which the *dharma[tā]kāya* has as its property?"

And they set forth [*AA*] verses [8.2-8.6] [as answer to this]: "The factors which foster enlightenment,..." etc.

(3) Others [reply that] [Buddha's] non-dual consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaittāḥ*), transformed through the transformation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), are what carry out [his] activities of teaching the *dharma*, etc. by generating appearances which have specific purposes in conformance to the conventional [perspective] of yogi [disciples]. How, according to those [whose assertion is immediately above], are those [consciousnesses and mental factors] which must surely be accepted, included [within the *kāyas*]?

(4) Some, [criticizing] the four *kāya* explanation, [quote *AA* vs. 1.17, the table of contents of *AA* chapter 8]: "*svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, and *nairmāṇika* as well, *dharmakāya*, with activity, proclaimed as four-fold."

*AA* vs. 1.17

In [this] verse, [they claim,] since the word "*dharmakāya*" is not said immediately after the word "*svābhāvika*," there are only three *kāyas*.

(5) But others [reply] that, on the strength of the intention just demonstrated, for felicity in the construction of the verse, and for the sake of associating activity with the gnosis alone, it was stated thusly. Therefore [the *AA*] is consistent with all the statements in other quarters (*pradeśāntara*)[5] that the *kāyas* are four-fold.

As explained in chapter 10, sec. 3 above, Haribhadra's own four *kāya* view is expressed in paragraphs (1), (3), and (5) immediately above, and the three *kāya* view of Ārya Vimuktisena and others is expressed in paragraphs (2) and (4). In paragraph (1), Haribhadra states his own view that the collection of undefiled dharmas comprises what he has identified as the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, the second *kāya* taught in *AA* 8. In

[5] Amano, 1983 has "*praśāntara*," while Amano 1975 (p. 270), Wogihara (p.916) and Tibetan have "*pradeśāntara*" ("*phyogs gzhan*"), which also makes more sense.

paragraph (2), Haribhadra paraphrases (and subtly misrepresents) Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary, where Ārya Vimuktisena includes the undefiled dharmas as Buddha's gnosis within the *svābhāvikakāya* alone. In paragraph (3), Haribhadra rebuts Ārya Vimuktisena (or rather his misrepresentation of Ārya Vimuktisena), by showing that the undefiled dharmas as conditioned sense consciousnesses and mental factors can not be included in any of Ārya Vimuktisena's three *kāyas*. In paragraph (4), Haribhadra presents a hypothetical philological objection by a three *kāya* proponent against his own four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA*. And in paragraph (5), he defends his interpretation against the objection on both philological and logical grounds (see our explanation of *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-25a7, in chapter 10, sec. 3 above).

Dharmamitra utterly misconstrued this important set of paragraphs. He did not realize that in them Haribhadra was presenting a debate, in the form of alternating arguments and responses by two parties (Haribhadra, with his four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8, vs. proponents of the traditional three *kāya* interpretation). Dharmamitra mistakenly thought that four different interpretations of *AA* 8 (comprising four different theories of buddhahood) were presented in those paragraphs. And he thought that Haribhadra set forth all four interpretations as equally valid, without rejecting any of them![6]

Dharmamitra, not recognizing that paragraph (1) in fact represents Haribhadra's own view, says that it represents the view of Jñānacandra

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[6] On this, see also Tsong kha pa, *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 223a4-b6.

and others who asserted the oneness and indivisibility of *svābhāvikakāya* and *dharmakāya*.[7] This is an astounding way to interpret that paragraph, which says nothing of the kind. Jñānacandra was the Yogācāra author of the *Kāyatrayāvatāraśāstravṛtti* (Pk 5291), a commentary on Nāgamitra's *Kāyatrayāvatāramukhaśāstra*, which teaches three *kāyas* in the traditional Yogācāra formulation (see chapter 8, sec. 2 above for reference to these two texts).

Even more astounding is Dharmamitra's interpretation of paragraph (2) above. Anyone who has read Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary on the *AA* can readily see that paragraph (2) represents Haribhadra's paraphrase of Ārya Vimuktisena. Evidently Dharmamitra never actually read Ārya Vimuktisena, for he completely misunderstands paragraph (2) to comprise a synopsis by Haribhadra of his own four *kāya* explanation of the *AA*![8] Again, this is simply amazing, since the paragraph says nothing of the kind. Importantly, Dharmamitra at this point attributes Haribhadra's own four *kāya* explanation of the *AA* not to Haribhadra himself, but to Haribhadra's teacher, Vairocana. In Dharmamitra's view, Haribhadra's explanation of the *AA* as a four *kāya* treatise did not represent his own view, but that of his teacher Vairocana, to whom he was paying respect. Haribhadra himself never actually chose one interpretation over another, says Dharmamitra![9] This will be discussed further below.

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[7] *Prasphuṭapadā*, Pk 5194, fol. 110-5-4 to 5-5.
[8] ibid., fol. 110-5-6. See *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fol. 241a1-a2 where Tsong kha pa says that Dharmamitra's misconstrual of paragraph (2) as Haribhadra's own position is "a basis for thunderous laughter."
[9] ibid., fols. 108-2-3 to 2-5, 110-5-6.

Dharmamitra's understanding of paragraph (3) above is equally inaccurate, but fascinating. He thinks a third interpretive position is being set forth, in which some scholar rejects the four *kāya* explanation as it was presented in paragaraph (2). According to this scholar (in Dharmamitra's explanation), the four *kāya* explanation of the *AA* is wrong to identify *svābhāvikakāya* (i.e. the emptiness of the other three *kāyas*) as a separate *kāya* in itself. For then the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, being one entity with that unconditioned emptiness, would become unconditioned, and could not be the basis of conditioned activity in the world. Or, if the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* is accepted, the *svābhāvikakāya*, as one entity with it, would have to be conditioned, which is impossible since it is unconditioned emptiness. Therefore, this scholar concludes, there are only three *kāyas*: the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya*, and the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Ultimately, all three are non-arising, i.e. empty, but that emptiness is not to be identified as a separate *kāya*.[10] Again, this is a fantastic misrepresentation of what Haribhara said in paragraph (3) above. But it is quite possible that it does represent the view of some early 9th century scholars with whom Dharmamitra was acquainted, and it is therefore of great historical interest.

His interpretation of paragraph (4) is equally fascinating. He thinks it represents a fourth interpretation of the *AA* and a fourth theory of buddhahood. In paragraph (4), he says, another scholar is claiming that since "*svābhāvikakāya*" and "*dharmakāya*" in *AA* vs. 1.17 (and vss. 8.1-

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[10] ibid., fols. 110-5-7 to 111-1-2.

8.6) are synonyms, there are only three *kāyas*. But this is to be understood in a special way. The *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is both *dharmadhātu* (universal suchness) and the innate, pure luminosity of gnosis (*jñāna*). It is beyond the perception and conceptualization of sentient beings. But, through the force of a Buddha's previous prayers (prior to enlightenment), buddhahood appears to the trainees as possessed of the collection of undefiled dharmas (even though, in essence, it is not any such collection). The *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* similarly appear to trainees through the force of previous prayers to help beings, but are equally not the way buddhahood actually exists. Therefore, in reality, a Buddha has only one *kāya*, consisting of pure luminosity and *dharmadhātu*, which is beyond our ken. But that one *kāya* is explained in Mahāyāna treatises as three in order to make buddhahood accessible to the conceptual categories of ordinary beings (the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* is conceptualized by us in terms of the collection of undefiled dharmas, *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*).[11] Again, this is not what paragraph (4) says. But it may well represent the view of some scholars in Dharmamitra's time, and is therefore of possible historical importance.

Paragraph (5) above, on the other hand, Dharmamitra gets right. He accurately understands it to be a reiteration of the four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8.

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[11] ibid., fols. 111-1-3 to 2-2.

Near the beginning of his commentary on *AA* 8, Dharmamitra makes important comments about the scholarly reaction in his time to Haribhadra's four *kāya* explanation. Some scholars, says Dharmamitra, claimed that Haribhadra himself accepted just three *kāyas* (even though he taught four in his *Sphuṭārthā*) because, they said, he taught only three in another of his texts. Dharmamitra does not name that other text, but, as noted earlier, it was probably the revised version of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*, which is attributed to Haribhadra as editor in the colophon of its Tibetan translation (see chapter 7, section 2.B.1.-6. above). Those scholars, says Dharmamitra, believed that Haribhadra taught four *kāyas* in his *Sphuṭārthā*, not as his own view, but as an expression of the view of his teacher, Vairocana. His own view was the teaching of three *kāyas*.[12] Dharmamitra gives a fascinating rebuttal to this. He refers to Haribhadra's comments in the five paragraphs of his *Sphuṭārthā* quoted above. He says that in those paragraphs, Haribhadra sets forth a number of different methods for dividing and enumerating the *kāyas* of buddhahood, and that he rejects none of them. Therefore, concludes Dharmamitra, Haribhadra's own view is that all those different systems for enumerating the *kāyas* are acceptable. This means that, according to Dharmamitra, Haribhadra personally accepts every one of the positions which Dharmamitra read into paragraphs (1) through (5) above.

Since Dharmamitra is the first sub-commentator on Haribhadra's *Sphuṭārthā*, and lived close to the time of Haribhadra, his remarks are

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12 ibid., fol. 108-2-3 to 2- 5.

historically very illuminating. According to Dharmamitra, at least some prominent scholars of his time repudiated Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8. Some, in fact, apparently out of respect for Haribhadra, reaffirmed the traditional three *kāya* interpretation by claiming that Haribhadra himself affirmed it! Haribhadra's four *kāya* explanations of the *AA*, they said, constituted merely a show of respect for his own teacher Vairocana, but did not represent his own views. This indicates that Haribhadra's new interpretation of *AA* 8 was unacceptable to some scholars who otherwise respected him and probably accepted his views on other matters. Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 was initially the source of significant controversy.

It is also interesting that Dharmamitra understands Haribhadra to set forth four different multiple *kāya* theories in *Sphuṭārthā* paragraphs (1) through (5) above, and to accept them all equally. This could indicate that all four theories were very much alive in Indian Buddhism at the time, and that Dharmamitra found it inconceivable that Haribhadra would reject some of them. It appears that a plethora of buddhological theories abounded, and that Haribhadra's own four *kāya* theory and interpretation of the *AA* initially appeared as just one more addition to the set of plausible and implausible theories. Dharmamitra's misinterpretation of the paragraphs above indicates that he did not even realize that Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation involved a critique and refutation of earlier interpretations of the *AA*. It seems, then, that the initial reaction to Haribhadra's analysis of the *kāyas* was somewhat confused.

Unlike Dharmamitra, who lived so close to Haribhadra's time, several later Indian commentators understood Haribhadra, recognized his four *kāya* analysis as logically superior to what had come before, and accepted his four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA*: Prajñākaramati (ca. 950-1000 CE), Buddhaśrījñāna (ca. 1200 CE, not to be confused with Buddhajñānapāda above), and Kumāraśrībhadra (no date available). It appears, then, that it took some time before Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory and interpretation of the *AA* gained credibility and became somewhat established in late Indian Buddhism, but eventually it did.

3. Prajñākaramati, Buddhaśrījñāna, and Kumāraśrībhadra

Prajñākaramati's commentary on the *AA* is the *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛttipiṇḍārtha* (Pk 5193). It is extremely brief, and, concerning *AA* 8, very incisive. Prajñākaramati summarizes Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the chapter, and also adds to it in an interesting way. He says that the *AA*'s 8th chapter concerns the *abhisamayaphalam* (the resultant realization) which is the *dharmakāya* (i.e. the inclusive *dharmakāya*, which includes all *kāyas*, etc.). That realization has two aspects: benefit for oneself, and benefit for others. The former aspect involves both the ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*) and the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*) of buddhahood. The ultimate truth (emptiness), is *svābhāvikakāya*. The conventional truth of buddhahood is of three types, differentiated according to the three types of persons who conventionally

perceive it: Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and *śrāvakas*, etc. This makes four *kāyas*, one being ultimate truth, the other three conventional truth. Buddhahood's "benefit for others," on the other hand, is its activity which works for others, helping them reach enlightenment stage by stage.[13] Prajñākaramati's two truth analysis issuing in four *kāyas* follows Haribhadra precisely. But his way of dividing the topics of *AA* 8 into "self-benefit" and "other-benefit," is, to my knowledge, unique.

Buddhaśrijñāna's *AA* commentary is entitled *Prajñāpradīpāvali* (Pk 5198). His comments on *AA* 8 comprise a brief, accurate summary of Haribhadra's interpretation, and, in one place, appear to echo Prajñākaramati's two truth summary of the four *kāyas*.[14]

Kumāraśrībhadra's *AA* commentary is entitled *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha* (Pk 5195). Although Kumāraśrībhadra adopts Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8, he gives it a slightly different twist. Haribhadra had identified the collection of undefiled dharmas as a *kāya* distinct from the *svābhāvikakāya*. The latter he identified as the innate purity (i.e. emptiness) and the adventitious purity (freedom from all mental obstructions) of those dharmas. Kumāraśrībhadra identifies the *svābhāvikakāya* simply as the innate purity of buddhahood, i.e. its emptiness alone. And he identifies the second *kāya*, which he calls *dharmakāya*, with the undefiled dharmas (Buddha's

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13 *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛttipiṇḍārtha*, Pk 5193, fol. 62-2-5 to 3-2.

14 *Prajñāpradīpāvali*, Pk 5198, fols. 220-4-8 to 224-4-7. Fol. 224-1-3 to 1-5 briefly summarizes the four *kāyas* with reference to the two truths, similar to the way Prajñākaramati did it. In one brief remark, Buddhaśrījñāna allows also for the three *kāya* theory by including gnosis and *dharmatā* in one *kāya*.

gnoses) in their purity from adventitious stain. He agrees with Haribhadra, then, that the activity of buddhahood is to be associated with the gnosis *dharmakāya* alone, conditioned gnosis being the source for enlightened activity in the conditioned world. Kumāraśrībhadra makes very clear Haribhadra's basic argument for positing a gnosis *dharmakāya* distinct from *svābhāvikakāya*. He says that the *svābhāvikakāya* (being emptiness which is unconditioned) has no activity. Therefore, a fourth *kāya* must be posited to serve as the very source for conditioned activity, that being the gnosis *dharmakāya*. And that means that *AA* 1.17 is indeed teaching four *kāyas*, with the words "*dharmakāya*" and "activity" logically linked in the verse (see chapter 8, sec. 1; chapter 10, sec. 3 on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 25a6-25a7).[15]

Later, in Tibet, the great scholar and founder of the dGe lugs pa sect, Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419), followed in the footsteps of these late Indian scholars by adopting Haribhardra's four *kāya* analysis of *AA* 8.

15 *Prajñāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha*, Pk 5195, fols. 118-1 to 2. sDe dge, nya, fols. 115b4-116a1.

4. Ratnākaraśānti

In various Tibetan sources, Ratnākaraśānti (ca. 1000 CE) is reported to have been a student of Nāropā and a teacher of Atiśa and 'Brog mi, to have presided over Vikramaśīla monastery, and also there to have been a contemporary of Jñānaśrīmitra, Prajñākaramati, and Vāgīśvarakīrti.[16] He was certainly one of the preeminent teachers of late Indian Buddhism. In his works, he often explicitly articulates a Yogācāra perspective.

Ratnākaraśānti wrote two important commentaries to the *AA*, known as the *Śuddhamatī* (Pk 5199, extant only in Tibetan translation) and the *Sāratamā* (Pk 5200, extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan). Of the two, the *Śuddhamatī* is most important for our purposes, for in its 8th chapter, Ratnākaraśānti explicitly critiques and rejects Haribhara's four *kāya* theory and interpretation of *AA* 8, and argues instead for a return to the three *kāya* theory and Ārya Vimuktisena's original three *kāya* interpretation of the *AA*.

The *Śuddhamatī's* 8th chapter concerns *AA* chapter 8 on *dharmakāyaphalam*. Ratnākaraśānti begins by quoting *AA* vs. 1.17 as the table of contents for the chapter (see chapter 8, sec. 2 above). Because Haribhadra sought ambiguity in that verse to support his four *kāya* theory, Ratnākaraśānti rewrites the verse to make it even less ambiguous than its orginal. The original verse, translated from the Sanskrit, reads as

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[16] Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, pp. 111, 122 (n. 405); Jaini, *Sāratamā*, intro. p. 3. For an overview of Ratnākaraśānti's writings, see Ruegg, ibid., pp. 122-124.

follows: "In its Essence, with its Enjoyment, and in its Emanation as well, *dharmakāya*, with its Activity, is proclaimed as four-fold." Haribhadra managed to impute enough ambiguity onto that verse to claim that it taught four *kāyas*, with the word "*dharmakāya*" referring to a fourth *kāya*, rather than to the title of the chapter (*dharmakāyaphalam*, see chapter 8, secs. 1 and 6 above). Rather than quibble with Haribhadra over the point, Ratnākaraśānti took it upon himself to rewrite the verse into an incontestable form, which appears in the Tibetan edition of his text as: "*ngo bo nyid longs rdzogs bcas dang/ de bzhin sprul dang rnam gsum dang/ mdzad dang bcas pa chos sku ste/ rnam pa bzhir ni yang dag brjod//.*"[17] This translates: "In its Essence, with its Enjoyment, and in its Emanation [it has] three aspects. With its Activity, [then,] the *dharmakāya* is proclaimed as four-fold." This separates out the first three key terms as a three-fold *kāya*: *svābhāvika*, *sāmbhogika*, and *nairmāṇika*, removing any possibility of interpreting the verse in terms of four *kāyas* as Haribhadra had done.[18] Ratnākaraśānti wanted to make it clear from the outset that *AA* chapter 8 teaches three *kāyas* and there was no argument to be had.

Ratnākaraśānti then quotes *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6, identifing them together as the *AA's* teaching on the first of the three *kāyas*, *svābhāvikakāya*. He identifies the *svābhāvikakāya*, the Essence Body, using the language of the *AA*, as "the *dharmatā* essence (*ngo bo nyid*, *svabhāva*) of the

17 *Śuddhamatī*, Pk 5199, fol. 281-2-8 to 3-1.
18 Ratnākaraśānti's penchant for rewriting verses of the *AA* in his commentaries has been well documented by Jaini with reference to the *Sāratamā*. See Jaini's Sanskrit edition of the *Sāratamā*, introduction, pp. 7-13.

undefiled dharmas utterly pure." That *dharmatā* essence is the *svābhāvikakāya*, says Ratnākaraśānti, because the undefiled dharmas (i.e. Buddha's gnosis), "having become utterly free of all adventitious error, abide in their own original nature (*rang bzhin, prakṛti*)." In support of this, Ratnākaraśānti quotes the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (vs. 9.2): "Purged of all obstructions, omniscience is attained, like a chest of gems thrown open is buddhahood declared."[19] By this description, and by choosing this particular metaphor of the *MSA* as his example, Ratnākaraśānti returns us to one of the fundamental Yogācāra formulations of enlightenment: the revelation of *cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*, innate purity of mind (see chapter 5, sec. 3 and chapter 9, sec. 3 above). According to this important early Yogācāra model, the minds of sentient beings are, in essence, an innate, luminous purity which is utterly obscured by moral and cognitive obstructions. Enlightenment is attained by the complete removal of such obstructions, fully revealing the innate, luminous essence of mind which was always there. Then the mind "abides in its own original nature," and enlightenment is attained like "a chest of gems thrown open," the gems (the pure luminosity of mind) having always been present, but now revealed.[20]

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19 *Śuddhamatī*, Pk 5199, fol. 281-3-6 to 3-8: "*zag pa med pa'i chos rnams rnam pa thams cad rnam par dag pa chos nyid kyis (sDe dge "kyi") ngo bo nyid gang yin pa de ni sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi ngo bo nyid kyi sku ste/ glo bur gyi 'khrul ba thams cad dang bral bas rang bzhin du gnas pa'i phir ro// de skad du yang/ sgrib pa kun gyi dri med dang/ rnam pa thams cad mkhyen nyid thob/ rin chen snod ni phye ba ltar/ sangs rgyas nyid ni yang dag bstan zhes bya ba gsungs so//.*"

20 Related to the above, Jaini translates an interesting passage from Ratnākaraśānti's *Sāratamā*, which explains the direct realization of the *dharmadhātu* as the revelation of innate luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāsvara*), *Sāratamā*, ed. by P. Jaini, pp. 19-20.

Ratnākaraśānti echoes Ārya Vimuktisena's remarks on *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6, etymologizing the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6 as "*dharmatākāya*," and thereby interpreting *AA* vss. 8.1-8.6 as an explanation of *svābhāvikakāya* (identified in vs. 8.6 as "*dharma[tā]kāya*"), which is described from a phenomenal perspective in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas (see chapter 9, section 3 above where Ārya Vimuktisena gives the same interpretation). He quotes part of the first verse from the *Kāyatrayastotra* (Pk 2015) which describes the *dharmakāya* (=*svābhāvikakāya*) as beyond singularity or multiplicity. This provides scriptural evidence that the *svābhāvikakāya* (though designated in terms of the multiplicity of dharmas in *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6) is actually beyond any such concepts and beyond any such multiplicity.[21]

Next, Ratnākaraśānti entertains Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA*, according to which the collection of undefiled dharmas in itself is identified as *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*, a fourth *kāya* distinguished from *svābhāvikakāya* (see chapter 10 above). He also takes note of Haribhadra's remark (in his *Sphuṭārthā*) that such a four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* accords with the four *kāyas* of "the other system" (*Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fol. 25a7, Ratnākaraśānti paraphrases "other quarters" as "other system"). Ratnākaraśānti assumes that Haribhadra means by "other system" the *Mantranāya*, the system of Buddhism based on the Tantras (see chapter 10, sec. 3, comments on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano,

[21] ibid., fols. 281-4-5 to 4-6.

1983, fols. 25a6-25a7).[22] He then critiques and utterly rejects Haribhadra's theory and interpretation of the *AA*.

Ratnākaraśānti's critique is of great historical importance, for he is the first scholar (whose work is available to us) to specifically defend Ārya Vimuktisena's original three *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 against Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation. And, importantly, he does so not just by quibbling over the wording of the *AA*, but by identifying Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory per se as an independent creation, which is alien to the spirit of the entire Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. He does so by asserting first that four *kāyas* were never taught in any Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and then by asserting that Haribhadra's delineation of four *kāyas* is also alien to the Tantric system (which teaches four *kāyas* but not Haribhadra's four), which would mean that Haribhara's theory has no place in either of the two systems of Mahāyāna Buddhist theory and practise (*Pāramitānāya*, the Mahāyāna system based on *sūtras* and *śāstras* such as the *AA*; and *Mantranāya*, the Mahāyāna system based on the *tantras*).

First, Ratnākaraśānti points out that three *kāyas*, and not four, are taught in the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. He says that the Large *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* teaches specifically three (not four) *kāyas* in its passages VIII 1 through VIII 3.[23] Ratnākaraśānti apparently assumed that those three

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22 ibid., fols. 281-4-6 to 4-7.

23 In the *Śuddhamatī*, he refers to *PP* passages VIII 1-VIII 3 as "the three passages in the *Bhagavatī* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) which begin with the word 'Moreoyer,...' and which teach just three *kāyas*." In the *Sāratamā*, he quotes them directly: *Suddhamatī*, Pk 5199, fol. 281-4-7, 281-5-2; *Sāratamā*, Jaini Sanskrit edition, p. 172.

passages were common to the large rescensions of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. In fact, they are found only in the revised version of the 25,000 verse *PP sūtra*, the version which contains the seventy topics of the *AA* inserted as titles for corresponding *sūtra* passages. The three passages he refers to are *rP* VIII 1-VIII 3, which are titled: "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*sāmbhogikakāya*," and "*nairmāṇikakāya*" respectively (see chapter 7, section 2.A. above for our discussion of the importance of these passages in late Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and for a translation of them). In any case, the point Ratnākaraśānti is making is that while four *kāyas* are taught nowhere in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, three are explicitly taught in those *PP* passages. Furthermore, he says, only three (not four) *kāyas* are taught in other *sūtras*.[24] In other words, Ratnākaraśānti is saying that only three (not four) *kāyas* are taught in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* which form the sole scriptural basis for the system of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*Pāramitānāya*) of which the *AA* is a part.

Although, as noted earlier, it was Yogācāra *śāstras* such as the *MSA* which first formalized the theory of three *kāyas* and denominated them, the basis for the concept of three *kāyas* certainly lay in earlier Mahāyāna *sūtras* (in their descriptions of a formless *dharmakāya*, exalted Buddha forms in pure realms, and limitless emanations, see chapters 4 and 5 above). But by the time of Ratnākaraśānti (ca 1000 CE), a number of later Mahāyāna *sūtras*, (following the lead of *śāstras* such as the *MSA*) did explicitly teach the three *kāyas* which the *śāstras* had formalized: e.g. *rP*

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[24] ibid., fols. 281-4-7 to 4-8.

passages VIII 1-VIII 3, the *Trikāya sūtra*, the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*, and the *Buddhabhūmi sūtra*. Ratnākaraśānti, like other scholars of his time, was unfettered by historical-critical textual concerns, and therefore assumed that the three *kāyas* taught in texts such as the *MSA* (and *AA*) were based upon an explicit teaching of them in earlier *sūtras*. And since, in the traditional view, *sūtras* are the word of the Buddha, he quotes *rP* as the word of the Buddha without realizing that its passages on the three *kāyas* (VIII 1-VIII 3) were added many centuries after the historical Buddha (and were composed based upon Ārya Vimuktisena's own *AA* commentary, see chapter 7 above).

Nevertheless, Ratnākaraśānti was quite correct that the four *kāyas* which Haribhadra promulgated appeared nowhere in any *sūtras*. Furthermore, as noted in chapter 10 above, the very concept of four such *kāyas* was developed by Haribhadra based upon a late 8th century logical and Madhyamaka agenda of a sort which was not operative in the composition of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* of earlier periods. Therefore, in spite of his lack of historical-critical apparatus, Ratnākaraśānti's basic claim that Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory was never a part of *Pāramitānāya* Buddhism (until Haribhadra introduced it) is correct.

Having established that Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory was not a part of non-Tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism, Ratnākaraśānti also rejects it as a part of the Tantric system. He says that although four *kāyas* are distinguished in the *Mantranāya* (the Tantric system), they are distinguished on a totally different basis than Haribhadra's. In the *Mantranāya*, says Ratnākaraśānti, the body, speech and mind (of a

Buddha) are identified as three *kāyas*, with their activity or sameness (*samatā*) identified as a fourth *kāya*. In Ratnākaraśānti's view, the *AA* stood in the same (non-Tantric) tradition of yoga and gnoseology which had generated the three *kāya* theory in texts such as the *MSA*. And like the *MSA*, the *AA* taught three *kāyas* as a normative theory of buddhahood. Furthermore, as a scholar of Tantra, he believed that the four *kāyas* taught in Tantra derived from a very different theoretical and practical context than the three *kāyas* taught in the *MSA* or *AA* (see chapter 10, sec. 3 above, our comments on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fol. 25a7). Therefore, in Ratnākaraśānti's view, Haribhadra was wrong to read four *kāyas* into the *AA*, and then was equally wrong to believe that that mistaken reading was thereby consistent with the Tantric system, since the four *kāyas* delineated in Tantra were delineated on a different theoretical basis than that upon which Haribhadra delineated his four *kāyas*.[25]

Having finished giving his reasons that Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory is not rooted in any part of the Mahāyāna textual tradition, Ratnākaraśānti turns next to Haribhadra's central inferential argument for positing four *kāyas*. Haribhadra, in his *Sphuṭārthā*, had asked how, if only three *kāyas* were accepted, were the consciousnesses and mental factors comprising the collection of undefiled dharmas to be included among those three *kāyas*? Haribhadra's interpretation of *svābhāvikakāya* made it just the

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[25] ibid., fols. 281-4-8 to 5-1. Later Abhayākaragupta, in his *Munimatālaṃkāra*, agreed with Ratnākaraśānti that Haribhadra's 4 *kāya* theory was alien to the buddhology of *Pāramitānāya*. However, unlike Ratnākaraśānti, he acknowledged that a 4 *kāya* theory similar to Haribhadra's did play a part in the Tantric tradition (in the context of Tantric practise, though not as a normative description of buddhahood). This will be discussed below.

emptiness of those undefiled dharmas, emptiness being permanent and unconditioned. Therefore, the dharmas themselves as impermanent, conditioned conventional existents could not be the *svābhāvikakāya*. The undefiled dharmas could also not be identified with *sāmbhogikakāya* or *nairmāṇikakāya* which manifest for other beings, for, according to Haribhadra, the undefiled dharmas are the primary cause for such manifestations, and the underlying cause of the manifestations is not to be identified with the manifestations themselves. Therefore, Haribhadra concluded, a fourth *kāya* consisting of the collection of undefiled dharmas must be posited, and it is reasonable to understand the *AA* as teaching such a fourth *kāya* (see chapter 10, sec. 3, on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-25a6).

Ratnākaraśānti turns to this inferential argument of Haribhadra's. He paraphrases Haribhadra's question, and then answers it: "In which of the [three] *kāyas*," Ratnākaraśānti asks, "are those [undefiled] dharmas to be included?" "In the *svābhāvika* [*kāya*]," he answers, "because they, by having become free of all error, are precisely the luminous quintessence (*gsal ba'i bdag nyid*), the *dharmatā*."[26] He continues: "The differentiation of their characteristics, being done in accord with the causal state, is conventional. [Based on reference to the causal state], such conceptual differentiation is permitted."[27]

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[26] ibid. fols. 281-5-1 to 5-2: "*de ltar na ni chos de dag sku gang (sDe dge adds "gyis") yin bsdus bar 'gyur zhe na/ ngo bo nyid kyis te/ de dag ni 'khrul ba thams cad dang bral bas gsal ba'i bdag nyid chos nyid tsam yin pa'i phir ro/.*"

[27] ibid., fol. 281-5-2: "*de dag mtshan nyid kyi dbye ba ni rgyu'i gnas skabs kyi rjes su 'brangs nas kun rdzob yin no/ spros pas mchog (sDe dge "chog") go//.*"

Ratnākaraśānti is saying that, at the actual attainment of enlightenment, there is no longer any conceptually differentiated collection of undefiled dharmas, different consciousnesses and mental factors. At the full enlightenment of buddhahood, the gnosis becomes fully purified, so that all that had obscured the innate, luminous purity of the mind is removed. What is left is the "luminous quintessence, the *dharmatā*;" i.e. the non-dual realization of *dharmatā* (suchness) in which cognitive subject (gnosis) and cognitive object (suchness) are no longer conceptually constructed or divided. Within such a non-dual realization, there is no longer any conceptual differentiation which constructs a set of undefiled dharmas, a set of different consciousnesses and mental factors. It is this non-conceptual gnosis of suchness, says Ratnākaraśānti, the luminous quintessence-*dharmatā*, which, as the essence of buddhahood is precisely the *svābhāvikakāya*.[28]

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[28] Ratnākaraśānti gives a clear presentation of his gnoseology in his *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa*. A particularly interesting passage is quoted in Kajiyama, *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 156, where Ratnākaraśānti identifies *prakāśamātra* (pure luminosity), *lokottarajñāna* (supramundane gnosis), and *parinispannasvabhāva* (the perfected nature) as the true knowledge of reality, free of the conceptual construction of subject and object: "*de bas na chos thams cad sems tsam dang rnam par shes pa tsam dang gsal ba tsam yin pas rnam par rig pa'i gzung ba phyi rol gyi don yod pa ma yin pas/ rnam par rig pa rnams kyang 'dzin pa'i rang bzhin du yod pa ma yin te/ 'di gnyis ni yid kyi mngon par brjod pa'i phyir chos thams cad kyi kun brtags pa'i rang bzhin yin no/ gang la brtags she na/ don med par yang kun tu brtags pa'i ngo bo nyid la mngon par zhen pa'i bag chags las skyes pa'i don du snang ba'i yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa'o/ yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa de ni chos rnams kyi gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid dang 'khrul pa dang phyin ci log dang log pa'i shes pa yang yin no/ 'di ltar de'i gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i rnam pa ni 'khrul pa dang bslad pa'i dbang 'bah zhig gis snang bas brdsun pa'i phyir yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa de la de skad ces bya ste/ de'i rang bzhin de ni yang dag pa ma yin pa'o/ yang dag pa nyid gang yin zhe na/ gsal ba tsam mo/ de nyid kyis na rnam pa de ni 'khrul pa'i mtshan ma dang spros pa'i mtshan ma zhes bya bar brjod de/ 'khrul pa'i dmigs pa yin pa'i phyir ro/ gnyis kyi mtshan zhes kyang bya ste/ gnis ltar snang ba'i phyir ro/ spros pa'i mtshan med (read ma) thams cad 'jig rten las 'das pa'i ye shes la*

The list of undefiled dharmas, then, says Ratnākaraśānti, is ascribed to a Buddha only conventionally, i.e. from a phenomenal point-of-view, based on the different mental qualities which were possessed in "the causal state." "The causal state" is the state prior to buddhahood, the state in which many different knowledges and mental factors operated at different times. Based on our understanding of that causal state, we may ascribe to buddhahood a set of different mental qualities, but we do so entirely from our own phenomenal point-of-view. In reality, a Buddha's non-dual realization is cognitively one with the *dharmatā*, with universal suchness, and as such, is undivided and beyond all such conceptual differentiation (see chapter 9, section 3 on the relation between Ratnākaraśānti's and Ārya Vimuktisena's explanations of this).[29] The

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*'gag par 'gyur la/ des na de ni ma 'khrul pa dang yang dag pa'i ye shes su yang dag brjod do/ de nyid kyi phyir de yang yongs su grub pa'i ngo bo nyid yin te/.*"

See also *Sāratamā* (Jaini Sanskrit edition, pp. 172-3) where Ratnākaraśānti explicitly equates *svābhāvikakāya* (of *AA* vs. 8.1) with the *dharmadhātuviśuddhi* of the Yogācāra tradition.

29 Ārya Vimuktisena had employed a similar argument to refute the Abhidharma contention that the *dharmakāya* consisted of the collection of undefiled dharmas per se (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 5185, fols. 92-5-6 to 5-7). Ārya Vimuktisena said that the term "*kāya*" (in "*dharmakāya*," meaning collection) was merely designated to the *dharmakāya* (*svābhāvikakāya*) "in accord with the previous state" (i.e. in accord with the state prior to buddhahood when the yogi's mind was differentiated into a collection of undefiled dharmas). But the *dharmakāya/svābhāvikakāya* was not itself any such collection, because it had passed beyond such differentiation and was unconditioned (see chapter 9, sec. 3 above). Ratnākaraśānti's argument above (*Śuddhamati*, Pk 5199, fol. 281-5-2) appears to have been based upon this statement of Ārya Vimuktisena's. But whereas Ārya Vimuktisena applied it as a criticism of the Abhidharma position on *dharmakāya*, Ratnākaraśānti applied it as a criticism of Haribhadra. This is appropriate, because, as we have seen, Haribhdra's four *kāya* theory represented an historical resurrection of the Abhidharma theory of *dharmakāya*, though updated to the Madhyamaka analysis of ultimate and conventional truth. In Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, *dharmakāya* was, simply, the collection of undefiled dharmas. In Haribhdra's scheme, *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* as that collection of dharmas was the essence of buddhahood on the level of conventional truth, while the emptiness of that collection, *svābhāvikakāya*,

undefiled dharmas, then, are not a *kāya* distinct from *svābhāvikakāya*, as Haribhadra claimed. They are precisely the *svābhāvikakāya* itself as it comes under the purview of ordinary beings and is designated from their phenomenal point-of-view.

Ratnākaraśānti, in his refutation of Haribhadra, wanted to take the discussion of buddhahood in Mahāyāna Buddhism back to its seminal (tri-*kāya*) formulation in the Yogācāra tradition, according to which the *svābhāvikakāya* was understood as a literally inconceivable, non-dual realization, a realization which could only be described in a broad way in accord with authentic texts and as an extrapolation from the yogic praxis and gnoseology of the Mahāyāna yogic traditions. According to Ratnākaraśānti, the *svābhāvikakāya*, the essential realization of buddhahood, was not to be primarily understood through the manipulations of a logic which was based upon the ordinary conceptual categories of sentient beings. This was true even when the logic employed conceptual categories (like the list undefiled dharmas) which are ordinarily imputed to buddhahood. The set of undefiled dharmas, said Ratnākaraśānti, was a valid description of buddhahood only to the extent that we kept firmly in mind its phenomenal nature; i.e. we had to remember that it was a description of buddhahood from our point-of-view, not from a Buddha's point-of-view (See chapter 4, sections 2 and 6 on the undefiled dharmas as not defining of buddhahood, and

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was the essence on the level of ultimate truth (see chapter 10, sec. 3, our comments on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 24b4-25a4).

*svābhāvikakāya* as an extrapolation of yogic praxis in the Yogācāra tradition).

In Ratnākaraśānti's view, to take our own conceptualization about buddhahood (the list of Buddha dharmas) and posit that as a separate *kāya* (the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*) as Haribhadra had done, was to mistake "the finger pointing at the moon" for the moon. Haribhadra had projected his own conceptual construction (the list of undefiled dharmas) onto buddhahood, and then, by positing that as a separate *kāya*, had mistaken it for buddhahood itself. There lies the heart of Ratnākaraśānti's repudiation of Haribhadra.

The core realization of buddhahood is a non-dual gnosis, a yogic experience, not a conceptualization. To what extent, then, do our conceptualizations of buddhahood accurately characterize it? To what extent is the very essence of a Buddha's realization accurately expressible in language? If scholars are to discuss buddhahood as the ultimate objective of a path and a practise which yogis are actually trying to accomplish, how is it to be described (so the practise to achieve it can be furthered) without grossly misrepresenting it? How are we to express the core realization of enlightenment without inadvertently mistaking our own expressions of buddhahood for buddhahood itself?

Whether or not Haribhadra fully realized it, the inferential analysis he had done to arrive at his four *kāya* reading of the *AA* implicitly raised these fundamental problems. For in the traditional three *kāya* formulation that preceded Haribhadra, strict boundaries had been drawn around the epistemological exclusivity of buddhahood, boundaries which Haribhadra

had crossed. In the orginal Yogācāra formulation, the essential gnosis of buddhahood (*svābhāvikakāya*) was said to be knowable only through personal realization (*pratyātmavedanīya*). It was described only in very broad terms, as a perfected non-conceptual gnosis of suchness (*nirvikalpajñāna, tathatāviśuddhi, dharmadhātuviśuddhi*, etc.), which had a special capacity to operate pervasively in the world. It was believed that the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, understood primarily by extrapolation from yogic praxis and gnoseology, was expressed as well as it could be in authentic scriptures such as the *MSA* (see chapter 4, sec. 6 and chapter 5 above).

For how are we ever to arrive at the precise content of a Buddha's gnosis by an inference based upon ordinary epistemological and logical categories? The core realization of buddhahood involved the utter deconstruction of all such categories, combined with the paradoxical ability (based on previous vows and merit) to manifest in a conditioned world which operates through them. This, in essence, is about as well as it can be expressed. Within the context of yogic practise which the Yogācāras presumably engaged in, involving the deconstruction of dualistic categories (i.e. the actual experience of the illusory quality of conceptually constructed phenomena), it probably appeared reasonable to leave it at that.

The early Yogācāra formulation (which also conditioned some important Mādhyamika formulations prior to Haribhara) assumed that the proper position from which to begin to understand buddhahood was the position of yogic experience itself. The authentic scriptures which

expressed that understanding were therefore to be given great weight. Here lies the reason for Ratnākaraśānti's prominent quotes from the *PP sūtra*, the *MSA*, and *Trikāyastotra* above. Ratnākaraśānti believed that authentic scriptures, themselves based upon the highest yogic realization (taught by acknowledged supreme yogis: Buddha, Maitreya, etc.), expressed the yogic experience of buddhahood as well as it could be expressed. Logical inference alone, independent of yogic experience, could not.

Haribhadra's analysis commenced from a very different set of assumptions conditioned by his period in Indian Buddhist history. 8th century Buddhism was revelling in the power of logic to clarify and resolve problems that had previously seemed unsolvable (including proofs of past and future lives, proofs of omniscience, etc.). From Haribhadra's perspective, the excessive absolutism of the Yogācāra formulation of buddhahood could be corrected through a Madhyamaka analysis which identified the essence of buddhahood (*svābhāvikakāya*) precisely as its emptiness of ultimacy. At the same time, by applying the Madhyamaka analysis of the two truths, the paradox of non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, i.e. the apparent contradiction of the *dharmakāya* being both unconditioned and conditioned (*asaṃskṛta* and *saṃskṛta*) could be clarified and resolved, and a firm philosophical foundation established for Buddha's pervasive activity in the world. In his analysis, however, Haribhadra distinguished the undefiled dharmas as a separate *kāya* from *svābhāvikakāya* precisely because of their conventional appearance to Buddhas (while *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were conventional appearances for

others). This was no small matter. It implied that the list of undefiled dharmas literally comprised a Buddha's realization, such that a Buddha perceived his own realization in terms of them (see chapter 10, sec. 3 above).

In short, in the Yogācāra three *kāya* formulation (which Mādhyamikas such as Candrakīrti had substantially followed), "*svābhāvikakāya*" and "*dharmakāya*" referred to a yogic realization beyond the logico-epistemological categories and precise inference of sentient beings. For Haribhadra, "*svābhāvikakāya*" and "*[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya*" referred to aspects of buddhahood which were to be distinguished precisely through logical analysis and inference.

According to Mahāyāna philosophy and yogic theory, conventional truth (*saṃvṛti satya*) comprises all things which exist in a nexus of causal and conceptual construction, i.e. all things within the experiential world of ordinary beings (non-Buddhas). To ordinary beings, things appear to exist as though independent of such conceptual construction, as though self-existent. The yogis on the Buddhist paths gradually learn to cognize all things within their experience as empty of such self-existence, i.e. as dependently originated (*pratītiyasamutpanna*), arisen only in dependence on causes and conceptual construction. In Haribhadra's scheme, a Buddha's undefiled dharmas become a unique sort of conventional truth, for they would be the only conventional truth experienced directly by Buddhas alone. This would mean that, as conventional truth, they would have to be conceptually constructed (and conceptually differentiated from *svābhāvikakāya*) by the Buddhas. But this runs counter to the entire

earlier trend of Mahāyāna buddhology, according to which buddhahood, in its own realization, has passed entirely beyond such conceptual differentiation.[30]

From Ratnākaraśānti's perspective, Haribhadra had gotten so mesmerized by his own logic that he mistook it for buddhahood itself. And buddhahood was, in essence, a yogic realization, not a logical construct. The list of undefiled dharmas, said Ratnākaraśānti, is only a conceptually differentiated set. It is our thought about buddhahood, not buddhahood itself. Haribhadra, mistaking his own thoughts for enlightenment, imparted to the list of undefiled dharmas the status of a new, fourth *kāya*. This, in Ratnākaraśānti's view, perverted the Mahāyāna tradition of buddhology. And it is for that reason that he explicitly based his refutation of Haribhadra, not just on the verses of the *AA*, but on the entire Mahāyāna textual tradition.

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30 In his *Sphuṭārthā*, Haribhadra distinguished the *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* from his other two conventional *kāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*) epistemologically, according to the types of person for whom each is a cognitive object (Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4 in chapter 10 above). Buddhas, he said, conventionally cognize the set of undefiled dharmas (= *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*), while bodhisattvas and lesser beings cognize the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* respectively. This entails that Buddhas themselves distinguish the undefiled dharmas conventionally, through their own discursive conceptualization. Haribhadra may not have intended this outcome, but it is implied by his buddhology.

If, in giving his epistemological criterion for distinguishing the undefiled dharmas as a separate *kāya*, Haribhadra had only meant that sentient beings conceptually construct the undefiled dharmas and then impute them onto buddhahood, he would have had no reason whatsoever to distinguish them as a separate *kāya*. For his three conventional *kāyas* are distinguished precisely according to whom they appear, and the *nairmāṇikakāya* is already identified as that aspect of buddhahood distinguished by its appearance to ordinary beings. If Haribhadra had been fully consistent with earlier Mahāyāna buddhology, according to which Buddhas experience their own gnostic realization entirely free of conceptual differentiation, he could not have distinguished *svābhāvikakāya* from *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, since the latter is only distinguished from the former conceptually, and is only experienced directly by Buddhas.

## 5. Abhayākaragupta

Abhayākaragupta was a scholar at Vikramaśīla monastery who lived about 1100 CE. He is an important figure historically in late Indian Buddhism, in part because he wrote a masterful, encyclopaedic treatise, called the *Munimatālaṃkāra* (extant only in Tibetan translation), in which he summarized the entire range of Mahāyāna soteriology and buddhology through extensive reference to the traditions of *Prajñāpāramitā-Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra.[31] In the third chapter of this treatise, Abhayākaragupta explains the eight *abhisamayas* (realizations) of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, and in one section, he focusses specifically on the eighth *abhisamaya*, *dharmakāyaphalam*, the subject matter of *AA* chapter 8.[32] It is this section to which we now turn.

Abhayākaragupta, in the beginning of his exposition on *AA* chapter 8, models his remarks on Ratnākaraśānti's *Śuddhamatī*. Like Ratnākaraśānti, he quotes from a variety of sources within the *sūtra/śāstra* tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*Pāramitānāya*), to show that while three *kāyas* are taught in many scriptures of the highest authority, four *kāyas* are taught

[31] I would like to acknowledge here the wonderful series of ground-breaking lectures on Abhayākaragupta's work which Professor Mathew Kapstein presented as a visiting lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in February, 1988. The content of those lectures, and private conversations on Abhayākaragupta with Dr. Kapstein, were both inspiring and enormously helpful to me. The portions of Abhayākaragupta's *Munimatālaṃkāra* which I discuss below were not covered in Dr. Kapstein's lectures, and any errors in what follows are entirely my own.

[32] *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fols. 231-5-8 to 236-5-6.

no where. Abhayākaragupta quotes from the revised version of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* (passages VIII 1-VIII 3 on the three *kāyas*), from the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (vs. 9.65 which declares precisely three *kāyas* as inclusive of all Buddha *kāyas*), from the *Trikāyastotra* (which teaches the same three *kāyas* in a Madhyamaka mode of expression, and which Abhayākaragupta ascribes to Nāgārjuna), and from Ārya Vimuktisena's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* (which says *AA* chapter 8 is teaching the same three *kāyas*). Abhayākaragupta chooses a set of quotations which span the entire *sūtra* and *śāstra* tradition of non-Tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism: *Prajñāpāramitā-Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. Throughout, three (not four) *kāyas* are taught. He concludes that the four *kāya* theory of Haribhadra (according to which the undefiled dharmas are distinguished from their emptiness and posited as a fourth *kāya*) was never a part of *sūtra/śāstra* (*Pāramitānāya*) Buddhism until Haribhadra himself introduced it. And as such, it is to be rejected.[33]

Having established that only three *kāyas* are taught in the *Pāramitānāya* in general and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* in particular, he comments upon the first of those *kāyas*, the *svābhāvikakāya*. His remarks, again, are modelled in large part upon those of Ratnākaraśānti,[34] but carry a more specifically Mādhyamika mode of expression. Abhayākaragupta, explicating *AA* vs. 8.1, says that the *svābhāvikakāya* is the non-arising, uncreated and unconditioned essence of

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33 ibid., fols. 232-1-3 to 232-2-6.

34 *Śuddhamati*, Pk 5199, fols. 281-4 to 5; *Sāratamā*, Sanskrit edition edited by Jaini, pp. 172-3.

the undefiled dharmas obtained by the supramundane path; it is the lack of self-existence of those dharmas freed from all discursive conceptualization and elaboration. Echoing both Ārya Vimuktisena and Ratnākaraśānti, he says that the term "*dharmakāya*" of *AA* vs. 8.6, means "*dharmatākāya*" ("body of *dharmatā*"), and refers back to the *svābhāvikakāya* of vs. 8.1 as its synonym (i.e. "*dharmakāya*" of vs. 8.6 does not, as Haribhadra had claimed, refer to a separate, fourth *kāya*). The *svābhāvikakāya/dharma[tā]kāya*, he says, has passed beyond all conceptualization, and thereby comprises a Buddha's personal *nirvāṇa* and supreme self-benefit. As the basis for the two *rūpakāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*), which manifest to carry out its extensive activities throughout the universe, it is also pervasive.[35]

In this description, Abhayākaragupta uses Mādhyamika terminology for *svābhāvikakāya* which identifies it more explicitly with *śūnyatā* than earlier three-*kāya* interpreters of the *AA* had done. He refers to it as the "the non-arising ... essence," a Mādhyamika expression for *śūnyatā*. Yet he also implies that *svābhāvikakāya* is gnosis as well, inclusive of the undefiled dharmas (in *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6) and serving as basis for pervasive activity. In fact Abhayākaragupta identifies *svābhāvikakāya* as both

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35 *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fols. 232-3-5 to 4-1: "*de ltar ni byang chub kyi phyogs la sogs pa'i chos rnams kyi ngo bo skye ba med pa ma bcos pa 'dus ma byas pa 'jig rten las 'das pa'i lam gyis thob par bya ba spros pa'i sgro 'dogs pa mtha' dag ldog pa rang bzhin med pa nyid ni ngo bo nyid kyi sku ste/ ngo bo'i rkyen phyis pas bstan pa'i phyir chos nyid kyi sku yin pas chos kyi sku yang ngo/ 'dir rnam par rtog pa thams cad nges par 'da'o zhes mya ngan las 'das pa dang rang gi don phun sum tshogs pa dang/ gzugs sku gnyis kyi rten nyid kyis skal pa ji lta bar phan pa sna tshogs pa'i mdzad pa rgya che ba nyid kyi phyir khyab pa'o/.*"

*śūnyatā* and gnosis together as one, and this becomes more explicit as he continues.

Like Ratnākaraśānti before him, Abhayākaragupta next poses the question central to Haribhadra's argument for four *kāyas*, in order to refute that argument: If only three *kāyas* are accepted, in which of them are the undefiled Buddha dharmas to be included? Responding to that question, Abhayākaragupta says:

> "Precisely the *svābhāvika[kāya]*. For [the undefiled dharmas], by having become free of all cognitive obstructions and their propensities, are precisely the *dharmatā* possessed of the nature of non-self-existence."

He continues in Ratnākaraśānti's vein:

> "The differentiation of their characteristics, being done in accordance with the causal state, is conventional."[36]

Abhayākaragupta's first statement directly identifies the undefiled dharmas with *dharmatā*. The undefiled dharmas (gnosis), by having become fully purified of all cognitive obstruction, are *dharmatā*, i.e. are epistemologically one with emptiness (*śūnyatā*). By having become fully purified, gnosis is indivisible from emptiness within the perfected realization of ultimate truth (*paramārtha satya*). Therefore, within the

36 *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fols. 232-4-1 to 4-5: "... *sangs rgyas kyi chos de rnams sku chis bsdus she na/ ngo bo nyid kho nas te/ bag chags dang bcas pa'i sgrib pa ma lus pas dben pas rang bzhin med pa nyid kyi bdag nyid chan gyi chos nyid tsam yin pa nyid kyi phyir la/ de rnams kyi mtshan nyid tha dad pa ni de rnams kyi rgyu'i gnas skabs kyi rjes su 'brang bas kun rdzob pa'o/.*"

actual realization of a Buddha (which is *svābhāvikakāya*), no differentiation of dharmas and *dharmatā* is made. The list of undefiled dharmas, he says, is ascribed to a Buddha only conventionally, i.e. only from a phenomenal point-of-view, based on the different mental qualities which were possessed "in the causal state," the state prior to the attainment of buddhahood. Abhayākaragupta's message (similar to Ratnākaraśānti's) is that within a Buddha's own gnostic realization (which is the *svābhāvikakāya*) the undefiled dharmas are not distinguished in any way from their emptiness (*śūnyatā*, *dharmatā*). Gnosis (undefiled dharmas) and emptiness are one. What then are a Buddha's undefiled dharmas? They are precisely the *svābhāvikakāya* as it is conceptualized and conventionally designated from the point-of-view of ordinary beings (of non-Buddhas).

Abhayākaragupta then gives the quotations which Haribhadra had presented in his *Sphuṭārthā* and *Āloka* to support his theory of four *kāyas*. But Abhayākaragupta turns Haribhara's own quotations against him[37]:

[37] The first quotation is given by Haribhadra in his *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4. The second occurs in his *Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 916 (discussed in chapter 10 above, note 28 ).

"Therefore it is said: 'The non-distinction of what is discerned from the discernment is accepted,' and 'Precisely that which is a dependent arising you accept as emptiness.' These serve as reasons to [establish] that *dharmas* and [their] *dharmatā* are not distinct from each other, which means *dharmas* exist [only] conventionally. Therefore, it is by obtaining those [conventionally existent] illusion-like *dharmas* that there does occur a comprehension, personally realized by the fully enlightened Buddhas alone, which is the *svābhāvikakāya*."[38]

Abhayākaragupta's point is close to that of Ratnākaraśānti, but his mode of expression here is distinctively Mādhyamika. Like Ratnākaraśānti, Abhayākaragupta refutes Haribhadra's fourth *kāya* (consisting of the undefiled dharmas distinct from emptiness) by denying that any differentiation is made in a Buddha's own awareness between gnosis (the undefiled *dharmas*) and emptiness (*dharmatā*). Ratnākaraśānti denied this differentiation based on the Yogācāra notion of the non-duality of subject and object, as it manifested in the revelation of the mind's innate luminosity at enlightenment. For Ratnākaraśānti, a Buddha's gnosis involved the full revelation of non-duality which no longer conceptually constructed "subject" versus "object," "gnosis" versus "*dharmatā*."

Abhayākaragupta's refutation of Haribhadra takes a more Mādhyamika mode of expression, focussing not just on the non-difference of subject and object (*grāhaka* and *grāhya*) but also on the non-difference of

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38 *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fols. 232-4-5 to 4-7: "*de nyid kyi phyir/ gang phyir dben pa dben gyur las/ tha mi dad pa nyid du 'dod/ ces pa dang/ gang zhig rten ching 'brel 'byung ba/ de nyid kyod ni stong par bzhed/ ces pa'i rigs pas chos dang chos nyid la tha dad med pa'i phyir/ chos de rnams kyang kun rdzob tu yod pa rnams so/ de nyid kyi phyir sgyu ma'i rang zhin can gyi chos de rnams rtogs pas kong du chud pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sang rgyas kho na'i so so rang gis rig par bya ba ni ngo bo nyid kyi sku'o/.*"

emptiness (*dharmatā*) and its conventionally existent locus (*dharma*). Mādhyamika analysis focusses on a phenomenon and finds its emptiness of self-existence. The emptiness is referred to as "*dharmatā*;" the phenomenon which is the locus of that emptiness, as "*dharma*" (or "*dharmī*"). Abhayākaragupta presents the same quotations which Haribhadra had presented, in order to establish the opposite of what Haribhadra had intended. Haribhadra had presented the quotes above ("The non-distinction ...," and "Precisely that .....") to show that although the undefiled *dharmas* and their emptiness (*dharmatā*) were the same in locus, they were distinguished conventionally, i.e. were separate for thought. Hence, the undefiled dharmas, as distinct from their emptiness, were to be posited as a separate, fourth *kāya*. Haribhadra intended his quotes to support that thesis (see chapter 10, sec. 3 above, on fols. 24b3-24b4, and chapter 10, footnote 28 ).

Abhayākaragupta presents the same quotes to establish precisely the opposite thesis: that although ordinary beings distinguish the *dharmas* and *dharmatā* conventionally (by their conceptual thought), in reality they are one. Hence, a Buddha, whose realization is the perfect cognition of reality, knows them as one. *Dharmas* and *dharmatā* are only distinguished conventionally within the conceptual thought of non-Buddhas. Therefore, ordinary beings may understand the gnostic realization of full enlightenment as the obtainment of the undefiled dharmas, and with reference to that, may conceptually distinguish a Buddha's gnosis from emptiness. But a Buddha's own gnostic realization conceptually constructs no such distinction.

Earlier, Abhayākaragupta had explicitly said (following Ārya Vimuktisena and Ratnākaraśānti) that the list of undefiled dharmas was a conventional (conceptual) differentiation of buddhahood from a phenomenal point-of-view, which was based on the "causal state." At the end of the remarks above, he refers back to that, by indicating that a yogi (in the causal state prior to buddhahood) does indeed realize the *svābhāvikakāya* by practising and fully obtaining the undefiled dharmas (as they are conventionally distinguished in the causal state prior to buddhahood). But when the causal state has issued in the resultant state, the actual attainment of the *svābhāvikakāya*, *dharmas* and their *dharmatā* are no longer differentiated. The *svābhāvikakāya* has left behind all such discursive conceptualization (*prapañca*).

Again, the basis upon which Haribhadra had distinguished *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* from *svābhāvikakāya* was the conventional appearance of the undefiled dharmas, as distinct from their emptiness, to Buddha's own awareness. But such a distinction is a conceptual one, made precisely by ordinary beings, not by a Buddha. Hence, says Abhayākaragupta, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, as it is realized by a Buddha (not by us), is undivided. To posit a fourth *kāya*, as Haribhara did, is to assume that a Buddha conceptually distinguishes conventional from ultimate truth, and understands them separately (much as we ordinary beings do). But our thought is not a Buddha's realization. Abhayākaragupta's point, like Ratnākaraśānti's, is that Haribhadra confused his own conception about buddhahood for buddhahood itself. While Ratnākaraśānti refuted

Haribhadra's theory from a Yogācārin perspective, Abhayākaragupta made substantially the same refutation from a Mādhyamika perspective.

To provide authoritative Mādhyamika support for his view that Buddha's gnosis and emptiness are undifferentiated within his realization, yet distinguished by us conventionally, Abhayākaragupta next paraphrases a portion of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*:

> "Likewise, it says in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, 'The non-arising [nature of phenomena] is suchness (*tathatā*). When the mind also becomes free from arising, it is as though it knows suchness, because it (the non-arising mind) depended upon its (suchness's) image (*ākāra*). [In conventional understanding], when the mind appears in the image of some object, then it knows that object. Employing that conventional mode of expression, [we also say] it (the non-arising mind) knows [suchness].' Ācārya Candrakīrti taught this."[39]

The passage which Abhayākaragupta paraphrases here appears in Candrakīrti's explanation of Buddha's non-dual gnosis (*Madhyamakāvatāra*, *buddhabhūmi* section, Poussin's Tibetan edition, pp. 357-8). According to Candrakīrti, a Buddha's non-conceptual gnosis consists of the "non-arising" of the mind as it conforms to "thatness" (*tattvam*), the non-arising nature of things ("thatness" being equivalent to "suchness," "emptiness," etc.). Although traditionally it is said that a Buddha "knows" thatness, as if a Buddha's mind and its object were

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[39] *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, fols. 232-4-7 to 5-2: "*de bzhin du dbu ma la 'jug par/ skye med de bzhin nyid do gang tshe blo yang skye ba dang bral ba/ de'i tshe de yis de bzhin nyid rtogs bzhin te de'i rnam par sten pa'i phyir/ ji ltar sems ni gang gi rnam par 'byung ba de ni des ni* (sDe dge "*na*") *yul/ yongs su shes ltar de'i tha snyad nye bar blangs nas rig par gyur pa'o zhes slob dpon zla ba grags pas gsungs so/.*"

distinct, such a mode of expression is merely based upon conventional modes of thought and discourse. In ordinary discourse, says Candrakīrti, we say we know an object when our awareness appears in the image of that object. Similarly, a Buddha's mind, which has entered into a non-arising state conforming to the non-arising condition of suchness, is said by us to "know" suchness. But, says Candrakīrti, in reality, within a Buddha's realization of suchness, there isn't any knowing of anything, because both knower and known have become just non-arisingness (*"de'i phyir rtog pa las de kho na nyid rtogs so zhes rnam par bzhag gi dngos su na 'ga' zhig 'ga' zhig gi shes pa ni ma yin te/ shes pa dang shes bya gnyi ga yang ma skyes pa nyid kyi phyir ro"*).

Abhayākaragupta, here, draws support from Candrakīrti's buddhology, according to which a Buddha's gnosis is distinguished from suchness only within the conventional thought and discussion of ordinary beings, not within a Buddha's own realization. Abhayākaragupta's buddhology, like Candrakīrti's, conforms to the traditional three *kāya* formulation which was centered on the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* as the undivided gnosis of suchness. Though both Abhayākaragupta and Candrakīrti were Mādhyamikas, they saw nothing inconsistent in their buddhology conforming to the three *kāya* structure first formulated in Yogācāra treatises. The ontological status of the *svābhāvikakāya* was something Mādhyamikas and Yogācārins might disagree upon. But the *svābhāvikakāya's* own lack of conceptual differentiation into "gnosis" and

"suchness" was something that, in the view of these scholars, was accepted by all Mahāyāna schools.[40]

For this reason, according to Abhayākaragupta, a fourth *kāya* such as Haribhadra posited (a *kāya* consisting of the undefiled dharmas distinguished in their own right from suchness) was taught nowhere within *Pāramitānāya* (*sūtra/śāstra*) Mahāyāna Buddhism, until Haribhadra himself introduced it. Abhayākaragupta is in agreement with Ratnākaraśānti, then, that Haribhadra's fourth *kāya* was never a part of *Pāramitānāya*.[41]

However, concerning the question of whether four *kāyas* similar to Haribhadra's were taught in *Mantranāya* (Tantric Buddhism), Abhayākaragupta's position does not agree with Ratnākaraśānti's.

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40 Let us pursue, for a moment, the buddhological section of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* to which Abhayākaragupta has drawn our attention. Given Candrakīrti's gnoseology above, the question naturally arises as to how a Buddha can teach the world about ultimate reality (thatness, suchness) when, in actuality, there is no "knower" of it. Candrakīrti says that the teaching of thatness manifests in the world through the words of *rūpakāyas* and miraculously generated sounds, based upon eons of a Buddha's prior merit, his blessing, and the suitability of trainees. He then goes on to explain the utter spontaneity of a Buddha's teaching and activity. A Buddha, utterly free of conceptualization, his gnosis fixed in the *dharmadhātu* (universal suchness) without moving from it for even a moment, carries out the benefit of sentient beings like a wish-fulfilling gem (i.e. without need of thought or reflection, free of *cittacaittāḥ*). He does so through the force of prior prayers made as a bodhisattva (before enlightenment) and based upon the karmic maturity of trainees (*Madhyamakāvatāra*, Poussin edition, pp. 358-361).

Candrakīrti's entire discussion here is strongly reminiscent of similar discussions in the Yogācāra texts which first formulated the theory of three *kāyas*, texts which centered their buddhology upon *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* both as the non-dual gnosis of universal suchness and as the source of spontaneous, pervasive activity in the world (see chapter 5, secs. 3 and 4 above). Abhayākaragupta's buddhology is in substantial agreement with Candrakīrti's, both commentators propounding a three *kāya* model which conforms structurally to the original Yogācāra conception, without thereby accepting the substantialism in later Yogācāra ontology which affirmed the ultimate or independent existence of mind and suchness.

41 *Munimatālaṃkāra*, Pk 5299, 232-5-4 to 5-5.

Ratnākaraśānti had said that the four *kāyas* delineated by Haribhadra (posited by distinguishing gnosis from emptiness as a separate *kāya*) were not to be found in *Mantranāya*. The four *kāyas* of *Mantranāya*, said Ratnākaraśānti, were the body, speech, and mind of a Buddha together with their activity or their "sameness" (see previous section).

Abhayākaragupta, on the other hand, affirms that a fourth *kāya* like Haribhadra's is indeed taught within *Mantranāya* (Tantric) Buddhism. But, importantly, such a fourth *kāya* is posited in *Mantranāya* not (as Haribhadra had done) on the basis of a Buddha's own discrimination of gnosis from *dharmatā*, but on the basis of the Tantric trainees' discrimination of gnosis from *dharmatā* for the purposes of their Tantric practise. Abhayākaragupta says:

> "Thus, a fourth *kāya*, a *kāya* [consisting] of the [undefiled] *dharmas*, which conventionally appear out of the *dharmatā* while being one nature with it, referred to as '*dharmakāya*' and [posited by distinguishing] those *dharmas* from the *dharmatā* as basis, [such a fourth *kāya*] is definitely not taught in the *Pāramitānāya*. [However], in the *Mantranāya* [such a fourth *kāya*] is definitely taught as though it were separate from its *dharmatā*, because it is posited from the point-of-view of the trainees' discriminations. But in reality, there too (in *Mantranāya*) it is not separate. Therefore, sometimes [in the *Mantranāya*] *svābhāvikakāya* is expressed by the term '*dharmakāya*,' and sometimes *dharmakāya* is expressed by the term '*svābhāvikakāya*.' And sometimes the essence of those two *kāyas* is expressed as the 'union' (*yuganaddha*), as the 'union body' (*yuganaddhakāya*), or as the 'essence body' (*svābhāvikakāya*), the pair of *dharma* and *dharmatā* being a unity in their quintessence and a unity in the nature of their indivisibility of emptiness and compassion."[42]

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42 *Munimatālamkāra*, Pk 5299, 232-5-4 to 5-8: "*de ltar na rten chos nyid dang chos rnams ni kun rdzob tu de las byung ba rnams dang de'i bdag nyid kyis so zhes pas ni*

Abhayākaragupta continues drawing distinctions between the *kāya* presentations of *Pāramitānāya* and *Mantranāya*, and concludes by saying:

> "Therefore, Haribhadra's [interpretation of *AA* chapter 8] was a presentation of four *kāyas* drawn from other quarters [from the *Mantranāya*] which was out of context and inappropriate."[43]

Abhayākaragupta's understanding of what Haribhadra had done is significantly different from Ratnākaraśānti's. In Ratnākaraśānti's view, Haribhadra had made up his theory of four *kāyas* himself and had expressed it in his interpretation of the *AA*. In Abhayākaragupta's view, Haribhadra had not made up his four *kāya* theory independently. Rather, he had drawn his theory of four *kāyas* from *Mantranāya* (Tantric Buddhism), and then had applied it inappropriately by reading it into the *AA*.

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*chos rnams kyi sku gang yin pa ni chos kyi sku'o/ zhes sku bzhi pa ni pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul la nges par bstan pa med do/ sngags kyi tshul las ni gdul bya'i khyad par gyi ngor chos nyid logs pa bzhin du rnam par bzhag pas nges par bstan to/ dngos por na der yang logs par gyur pa med do/ de nyid kyi phyir 'ga' zhig tu chos kyi sku'i sgras ngo bo nyid kyi sku brjod par bya la/ 'ga' zhig tu ngo bo nyid kyi sku'i sgras chos kyi sku'o/ kha cig tu ang sku gnyis kyi rang bzhin chos dang chos nyid zung ni de'i bdag nyid kyis 'brel pa'i phyir dang/ stong pa nyid dang snying rje dbyer med pa'i [*sDe dge adds "*rang*"] *gi ngo bo nyid kyis 'brel pa zhes zung 'jug dang zung 'jug gi sku dang ngo bo nyid kyi skur yang ngo/.*"

43 ibid., 233-1-5 to 1-6: "*de'i phyir skabs su ma bab cing mi 'thad pa phyogs gzhan nas gsungs pa'i sku bzhi rnam par bzhag pa ni seng ge bzang po'i'o zhes gnas so/.*" Abhayākaragupta, like Ratnākaraśānti, assumed that Haribhadra was referring to the *Mantranāya* when he said in his *Sphuṭārthā*: "Therefore [the *AA*] is consistent with all the statements in other quarters (*pradeśāntara, phyogs gzhan nas*) that the *kāyas* are four-fold (Amano, 1983, fol. 25a7)." Ratnākaraśānti thought that Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* was not consistent with Tantra although Haribhadra thought it was. Abhayākaragupta, on the other hand, thought Haribhadra had indeed drawn his four *kāya* theory from Tantric Buddhism, but had applied it inappropriately outside of its proper practical context, by making it into a normative description of buddhahood within the *Pāramitānāya* tradition.

According to Abhayākaragupta, four *kāyas* like Haribhadra's are indeed taught in *Mantranāya* by making a distinction between gnosis (*dharma*) and *dharmatā*. That distinction, however, is made by Tantric practitioners who conceptually distinguish different elements of the result (buddhahood) in order to align them with different psycho-physical elements of the basis and the path. Such distinctions are made in the context of Tantric practise so the trainees can imitate various aspects of buddhahood as their practise.

But those distinctions between gnosis and *dharmatā*, compassion and emptiness, etc. are made by Tantric trainees who must conceptualize buddhahood *prior* to achieving it. They are not made within a Buddha's own awareness. In fact, says Abhayākaragupta, in Tantric theory too, upon the actual realization of buddhahood, the conceptual distinction that trainees have drawn between gnosis (the undefiled *dharmas* as a separate "*dharmakāya*") and emptiness (*dharmatā* alone as a separate "*svābhāvikakāya*") is erased. And this is expressed in Tantric Buddhism precisely by the symbolization of resultant buddhahood as a union (*yuganaddha*) where all conceptualized distinctions between *dharma* and *dharmatā*, compassion and emptiness, etc. are transcended.

Thus, within *Mantranāya* (the Tantric system of Buddhism) says Abhayākaragupta, there is a purpose in provisionally distinguishing gnosis from *dharmatā* as part of the practise of Tantric trainees, where such a distinction is understood to be made from the perspective of those trainees, but not from the perspective of Buddhas per se. This leads to four and five *kāya* schemes whose purpose is not to serve as normative

descriptions of buddhahood, but as schemes for a Tantric yogic practise which must conceptualize buddhahood prior to achieving it.

*Pāramitānāya* (the *sūtra/śāstra* system of Buddhism of which the *AA* is a part), unlike *Mantranāya*, is not centered on taking buddhahood, as conceptualized by trainees, into the path of practise. The descriptions of buddhahood found in *Pāramitānāya* texts such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, and the *AA* are not schemes for yogic practise. They are normative descriptions of buddhahood. They were intended to be descriptions of buddhahood as it is personally realized by a Buddha (*svābhāvikakāya*) and as it manifests for non-Buddhas (*sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya*). The three *kāya* scheme of *Pāramitānāya* centers on *svābhāvikakāya* as a realization which has transcended all conceptual discrimination, including that which would separate gnosis from *dharmatā*, conventional from ultimate truth. This provides no basis within a Buddha's own awareness to distinguish a fourth *kāya* of gnosis separate from its emptiness. Hence, a theory of three *kāyas* was normative for *Pāramitānāya* Buddhism (until Haribhadra saw fit to change it in the 8th century). In *Mantranāya*, too, buddhahood in its own right is symbolized in terms of a union (*yuganaddha*) of conventional and ultimate truth, a unity of what used to be conceptually divided prior to enlightenment, but is no longer divided.

Thus, according to Abhayākaragupta, within both *Pāramitānāya* and *Mantranāya*, the distinction between a Buddha's gnosis (*dharma*) and *dharmatā* is made only by persons who are not yet Buddhas. A Buddha's own awareness does not construct that distinction. And with that understanding, practitioners of *Mantranāya* conceptualize buddhahood in

four or more *kāyas* for purposes of their practise, without mistaking their own conceptualization for the actual realization of buddhahood per se.

In Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory and interpretation of *AA* 8, on the other hand, the fourth *kāya* is distinguished based upon a distinction between gnosis and *dharmatā* which is supposed to be made within a Buddha's own awareness (see chapter 10, sec. 3 above, where *jñānātmaka dharmakāya* is distinguished as a separate *kāya* because of its conventional appearance to Buddhas per se). Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory, as an interpretation of the *AA* (which is a *Pāramitānāya* text), was intended as a normative description of buddhahood. But in that description, *svābhāvikakāya* is distinguished from *[jñānātmaka] dharmakāya* through a conceptual distinction made by Buddhas themselves. This, in Abhayākaragupta's view, runs counter to both the *Pāramitānāya* and *Mantranāya* traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

According to Abhayākaragupta, therefore, Haribhadra took distinctions which were intended to be used only in the context of Tantric practise, and applied them outside of that context to the normative descriptions of buddhahood found within the *Pāramitānāya* tradition (as exemplified in the *AA*). In Abhayākaragupta's view, Haribhadra had mistaken a conceptualization about buddhahood (used for practical purposes in Tantric yoga) for buddhahood itself (as it was actually realized by a Buddha). By taking a *Mantranāya* scheme out of its own context of praxis, Haribhadra had made a normative theory of buddhahood which was acceptable neither to the *Pāramitānāya* nor to the *Mantranāya* traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Although

Abhayākaragupta's reasons differ somewhat from Ratnākaraśānti's, in the end he reaches a similar conclusion: Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory, as a normative theory of buddhahood, is inconsistent with the entire Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. Later, in Tibet, Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge (1429-1489), one of the preeminent philosophers of the Sa skya sect, agreed with this conclusion.

# CHAPTER XII

# THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES IN TIBET: TSONG KHA PA AND GO RAM PA

## 1. Introduction

In Tibet, scholars chose either Ārya Vimuktisena's or Haribhadra's interpretation of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* chapter 8, depending on what implications for buddhology they saw in their project of developing a systematic philosophy out of the thousands of sūtras and śāstras they had received from India. Within that project, the Tibetans perceived a number of problems as inter-related: problems concerning the two truths, the perfect knowledge of them (which is enlightenment), and the description of that knowledge as "embodied" in Buddha *kāyas*. Tibetan scholars explored some of the implicit logical relations between Buddhist ontology (the two truths), epistemology (Buddha's gnosis) and theology (the Buddha *kāyas*) which earlier Indian scholars had not explicitly discussed. In doing so, they further deepened the debate over the *kāyas* which they had inherited from India. As in India, the debate centered on the 8th chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, but the interpretive choices made on that chapter were related to the systematic philosophies which

the Tibetans developed in their commentaries on other Indian texts as well, particularly texts such as Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* whose last section (on the "*buddhabhūmi*") explicates the nature of a Buddha's gnosis.

Of the many Tibetan scholars who commented upon the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, two are of special interest as we trace the three vs. four *kāya* debate into Tibet: Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419), the founder of the dGe lugs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, and Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge (1429-1489), one of the most influential scholars of the Sa skya sect.

Tsong kha pa composed an extensive commentary on the *AA* known as the *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*. This commentary is of particular interest to us for several reasons. Many of Tsong kha pa's decisions regarding the proper interpretation of principal Indian texts and schools became normative for the entire sect which he founded. In many cases, dGe lugs pa commentators who came after him sought to fine-tune the doctrinal positions which Tsong kha pa had already established. From amongst his extensive collected works, the *Legs bshad gser 'phreng* is probably one of Tsong kha pa's more controversial works. It is said to have been his first major scholarly composition, composed when he was a young man, and thus not a fully mature work. Therefore, a few of its positions are not followed by later dGe lugs pa commentators. It is believed that Tsong kha pa, in later life, passed on his more mature views of the *AA* to one of his principal disciples, rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen. And for this reason rGyal tshab's *AA* commentary, *rNam bshad snying po'i rgyan*, is probably

the most widely referred to by later dGe lugs pa commentators. Nevertheless, Tsong kha pa's basic interpretive decisions in his *Legs bshad gser 'phreng* on *AA* chapter 8 did set the standard which was followed by rGyal tshab and then by all major commentators of the dGe lugs pa sect who came after.

Since our study focusses on the *AA's* 8th chapter, and Tsong kha pa's decisions on that chapter did become normative for the sect he founded, his own commentary is of special relevance to us. Furthermore, Tsong kha pa's commentary surveys the views of the major Indian *AA* commentators before presenting his own reasons for selecting Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 over the others. It therefore sheds light on the original rationale for some of the basic buddhological positions which the dGe lugs pa sect has followed to the present day.

The other Tibetan commentator we will focus on is the great Sa skya scholar Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge. Based on his own careful and synoptic survey of the Indian texts, he too made the basic interpretive decisions on *AA* 8 which much of his sect has followed up to the present day. Of special relevance for us is the fact that he arrived at conclusions which were diametrically opposed to those of Tsong kha pa, and then argued very articulately for his positions in explicit opposition to Tsong kha pa's. Go ram pa chose Ārya Vimuktisena's over Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8, for reasons not unrelated to those of Abhayākaragupta and Ratnākaraśānti discussed in the previous chapter. In section 3 of this chapter, we will focus mainly on Go ram pa's most important *AA* commentary, the *sBas don zab mo'i gter*.

In Tsong kha pa and Go ram pa, then, we have two of the most influential Tibetan representatives of Haribhadra's and Ārya Vimuktisena's opposing buddhological positions. Their debate over the nature of enlightenment represents an historical continuation from India to Tibet of the controversy we have traced in the previous chapters, a controversy which quietly continues even up to the present day amongst dGe lugs pa and Sa skya scholars in Tibetan communities of South Asia.

## 2. Tsong kha pa's Buddhology

In the 8th chapter of his *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary, the *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, Tsong kha pa surveys the views of the major Indian scholars we have discussed in the previous chapters, and chooses Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 over the others. Focussing especially on Ārya Vimuktisena, Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta, he sets forth his reasons for rejecting their three *kāya* interpretations of *AA* 8 and for accepting Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation instead.

First Tsong kha pa briefly summarizes Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 in terms of four *kāyas*: *svābhāvikakāya*, *jñānadharmakāya* ("*ye shes chos sku*," an abbreviated Tibetan expression for Haribhadra's *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*), *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*. He then takes special note of Dharmamitra's report on the scholarly reaction to Haribhadra's interpretation. Dharmamitra, in his *Prasphuṭapadā*, claimed that some Indian scholars of his time thought Haribhadra accepted a three

*kāya* interpretation of the *AA*, but that he presented four *kāyas* in his *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā* merely as an expression of his teacher Vairocana's views. Dharmamitra himself reached the conclusion that Haribhadra personally accepted all the different ways of enumerating the *kāyas* (see chapter 11, sec. 2 above).

Tsong kha pa rebuts these contentions, arguing that the four *kāya* presentations in the *Āloka* and *Sphuṭārthā* clearly represented Haribhadra's own view. He notes, however, that Haribhadra did express the aspiration to "attain the three *kāyas*" in the closing remarks of his *Āloka*, which would mean that, in some sense, Haribhadra did accept three *kāyas*. Tsong kha pa therefore concludes that Haribhadra's position is the following. Where a Buddha's undefiled dharmas (gnoses) are explicitly included within the first of three *kāyas*, i.e. where the first *kāya* is posited as a "*dharmakāya*" which is gnosis or which explicitly includes gnosis, Haribhadra does accept three *kāyas*. But where the undefiled dharmas are not included in the first of three *kāyas*, i.e. where the first *kāya* is posited as *svābhāvikakāya* alone (distinct from gnosis), then Haribhadra can not accept such a set of three *kāyas* as a normative description of buddhahood. For this reason, Haribhadra rejected *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya* as the set of *kāyas* taught in *AA* 8, because (in his view) Buddha's gnoses could not be identified with any one of those three *kāyas*. In Tsong kha pa's words: "Therefore, Ācārya [Haribhadra] accepts that *dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya* are correctly three *kāyas*. But he does not accept that *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and

*nairmāṇikakāya* are correctly three *kāyas*, because the consciousnesses and mental factors [*cittacaitta*, i.e. the gnoses] of the Buddha stage are not any of those *kāyas*."[1]

Already in these comments, it is clear that Tsong kha pa viewed the tri-*kāya* formulation of Mahāyāna traditions which preceded Haribhadra through Haribhadra's perspective. Tsong kha pa assumed that the traditional tri-*kāya* theory of *svābhāvikakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, *nairmāṇikakāya* did not identify *svābhāvikakāya* with Buddha's gnosis. For this reason, he says, Haribhadra can not accept that tri-*kāya* formulation of buddhahood, for it leaves out a Buddha's "consciousnesses and mental factors" (*cittacaitta*), a Buddha's gnosis. Therefore, says Tsong kha pa, Haribhadra can accept three *kāyas* as descriptive of buddhahood where the first *kāya* is designated "*dharmakāya*" and identified with or inclusive of a Buddha's gnosis, but not where the first *kāya* is understood as *svābhāvikakāya* (which is supposed to leave out the gnosis).

As chapters four and five above demonstrate, the orginal formulation of three *kāyas* in Mahāyāna Buddhism identified *svābhāvikakāya* precisely as a Buddha's non-dual gnosis, where that gnosis was understood to be indistinguishable from its object: universal suchness. It was Haribhadra who first logically separated the gnosis from the suchness of a Buddha's own realization, and then posited the gnosis as a separate (fourth) *kāya*.

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[1] *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 223a3 to 223b5. Later in his *Legs bshad gser 'phreng* (fols. 228a3-a5), Tsong kha pa identifies the *svābhāvikakāya* (as generally understood in the Mahāyāna) to be the suchness (emptiness, *dharmatā*) of the Buddha's mind, distinct from his gnosis.

He did so for logico-Mādhyamika reasons relevant to his time which were outlined in chapter 10 above. But, prior to Haribhadra within the Mahāyāna tradition, "*svābhāvikakāya*" was not understood to designate suchness or *śūnyatā* alone (distinct from gnosis). Haribhadra reinterpreted the term to have that specific meaning. Tsong kha pa, relying upon Haribhadra's point-of-view, understood the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" through Haribhadra's reinterpretation of it, and was apparently unaware that the term had had another meaning prior to Haribhadra's time. As we also noted in chapter 4 (sec. 5) above, "*dharmakāya*," when used in its exclusive sense as the name for the first of the three *kāyas*, was simply equivalent to "*svābhāvikakāya*."

Tsong kha pa next gives a brief summary of Ārya Vimuktisena's three *kāya* interpretation, and discusses the other Indian scholars who later followed it. He quotes Ārya Vimuktisena and explains his meaning:[2]

> [Ārya Vimuktisena's] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti* says: "Now *dharmakāya [phalam]* is to be explained. It should be known as three-fold: *svābhāvikakāya* (Essence Body), *sāmbhogikakāya* (Shared Enjoyment Body), and *nairmāṇikakāya* (Emanation Body)."[3]
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> In this system, the [*svābhāvikakāya*, Essence Body] is the body which is the essence (*ngo bo*) of the Buddha dharmas purified of all defilement. [Ārya Vimuktisena] explains the [*svābhāvikakāya*] as such with the understanding that the essence [comprising the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *dharmatā* of the *dharmas*] together with the qualities which possess that essence [the *dharmas* themselves] are undivided. [Bhadanta Vimuktisena's] *Abhisamayālaṃkārakārikā-vārttika* agrees with [Ārya Vimuktisena's] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*.

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2 *ibid.*, fol. 224a1 to a3.

3 *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*, Pk 518?, fols. 92-4-6 to 4-7.

Here too, Tsong kha pa's understanding of Ārya Vimuktisena is conditioned by Haribhadra more than he may have realized. As mentioned above, Tsong kha pa understands the term "*svābhāvikakāya*" to refer not to Buddha's gnosis per se, but only to the "essence" of that gnosis, its emptiness and purity. Therefore, he says, Ārya Vimuktisena interpreted *AA* 8 to be teaching *svābhāvikakāya* as the essence (emptiness, *śūnyatā*, *dharmatā*) of the gnosis with the implicit understanding that that essence and the thing whose essence it is (the gnosis) are one locus (spatially undivided though separate for thought).[4] Tsong kha pa assumed that Ārya Vimuktisena distinguished *svābhāvikakāya* primarily through a Mādhyamika analysis of *dharma* (conventional substratum, gnosis) and *dharmatā* (the emptiness of the conventional substratum, the emptiness of the gnosis), where *svābhāvikakāya* is understood to be the latter as spatially undivided from the former. But this imputes to Ārya Vimuktisena a special *dharma/dharmatā* framework for Buddha *kāya* theory which Haribhadra himself had introduced long after Ārya Vimuktisena had lived.

As we have seen, prior to Haribhadra, the theory of *svābhāvikakāya* was not couched in terms of a distinction between *dharma* and *dharmatā*, but was understood precisely as a non-dual realization in which gnosis and emptiness (as subject and object, *grāhya* and *grāhaka*) were no longer conceptually differentiated. *Svābhāvikakāya* was the personal realization of buddhahood which was said to have passed beyond the conceptual

[4] Tsong kha pa reiterates this understanding of Ārya Vimuktisena later in his *Legs bshad gser 'phreng* at fol. 239b1-b6.

construction which distinguishes any such categories as "subject" and "object," "*dharma*" and "*dharmatā*," etc. (see chapters 4 and 5 above). It is this formulation of *svābhāvikakāya* which Ārya Vimuktisena had followed (in line with the entire 3 *kāya* tradition of Mahāyāna buddhology), not Haribhadra's formulation according to which *dharmatā* (distinct from *dharma*) is distinguished as *svābhāvikakāya* (see chapters 9 and 10 above).

Because Tsong kha pa understood the very term "*svābhāvikakāya*" through Haribhadra's late 8th century redefinition of it, he was unaware that the term had had quite another meaning prior to Haribhadra. Tsong kha pa therefore assumed that Ārya Vimuktisena, and all such earlier three *kāya* commentators, had identified *svābhāvikakāya* much as Haribhadra had done, as the emptiness (*dharmatā*) per se of Buddha's gnosis (not as the non-dual gnosis itself). As the previous chapters of this thesis demonstrate, however, this represents a major historical error.

Tsong kha pa next quotes Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta where they presented reasons in their commentaries for rejecting Haribhadra and for following Ārya Vimuktisena's three *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8.[5] We presented Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's positions in chapter 11 above. Tsong kha pa also quotes from the 11th century scholar Ratnakīrti, a minor *AA* commentator (whose statement that the undefiled dharmas were to be included in the *sāmbhogikakāya* was refuted by Abhayākaragupta).[6] It is Ārya Vimuktisena, Ratnākaraśānti and

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[5] *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 224a3-225a6. Cf. chapter 11 above, sections 4 and 5.
[6] *ibid.*, fols. 225a6 to 225b4.

Abhayākaragupta upon whom Tsong kha pa focusses as the primary opposition to Haribhadra.

Having briefly summarized the opposing interpretations of *AA* 8, Tsong kha pa then presents his own reasons for choosing Haribhadra's over the others. A translation of this portion of the *Legs bshad gser 'phreng* follows. The paragraphs are numbered to show the correspondence between the sections of the translation below and our comments upon it which follow it.

*Legs bshad gser 'phreng* - [Dharamsala: Shes rig dpar khang, 1985, fols. 225b5-226b6]

(1) Which of these systems is to be accepted? As explained above, many Indian [scholars], and also many of us [Tibetans], have denounced Ācārya [Haribhadra's] position as wrong. Nevertheless, I think that it is the correct one. How so? Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's ultimate criticism of it [boils down to this]: "The [undefiled dharmas consisting of] the factors which foster enlightenment, etc. were not taught as a fourth *kāya* in the Philosophical Vehicle [*mtshan nyid theg pa*, *lakṣaṇayāna*, a synonym for "*Pāramitānāya*," referring to the non-Tantric system of Mahāyāna Buddhism which includes the *AA*]. And although [the *kāyas*] are taught as four in the *Mantranāya*, the way in which they are posited in that system is different, since it represents a different Vehicle." That is all.
(2) The following response should be made to this. Upon examination, it does appear that the [undefiled] dharmas were actually taught as a fourth *kāya* in the Philosophical Vehicle. Doesn't the name of the fourth *kāya* ["*dharmakāya*"] appear clearly in the text of *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* [chapter 8] which begins [with vs. 8.1]: "The *svābhāvikakāya* of the Sage" followed by [verses 8.2-8.6 which conclude by saying that the undefiled dharmas]: "... are called the *dharmakāya*"? [Those who interpret the *AA* as a three *kāya* text] argue that the

expression ["*dharmakāya*"] refers to the *dharmatākāya*, the suffix "*-tā*" having been elided. When one seeks for a [hidden] significance in the text, [one can find] a basis for arguing whether it teaches a *dharmatākāya* or a *dharmikāya*. But when the text is read literally, it does teach a separate [fourth] *kāya* [where vs. 8.6 says the undefiled dharmas "are called the *dharmakāya*"]. So what need is there to seek other significance [in the text]? For us the assertion [of a fourth *kāya*] is proven simply by the statement which is right there [in the text], while you [who interpret the *AA* as a three *kāya* text] assert something which was not stated in the text at all!

(3) Furthermore, the claim [by Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta] that the [undefiled dharmas] were not taught separately in the Philosophical Vehicle as a *jñānakāya* (gnosis *kāya*) needs to be examined.[7] Is this claim saying that the name ["*jñānakāya*"] was missing in [the *sūtras* and *śāstras* of] the Philosophical Vehicle, or is it saying that what the name refers to was not taught?

(4) If the former, then whenever a certain name is not clearly stated, the [thing the name refers to] is not being discussed. If that is the nature of the claim, then the ones who hold to it must give up their own assertion that it is the "*dharmatākāya*" which is referred to [in *AA* vs. 8.6 where it says that the undefiled dharmas] "are called the *dharmakāya*." There are countless such [cases where a thing is affirmed without explicitly giving its name].

(5) If the claim is making the latter point, [that what is referred to by the name "*jñānakāya*" was not taught in the *sūtras* and *śāstras* of the Philosophical Vehicle], then there are only two possibilities: either the undefiled dharmas are the two *rūpakāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*), or they are the *svābhāvikakāya*. If they are the *rūpakāyas*, how would that not contradict [Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's] own position [that the dharmas are included in the *svābhāvikakāya*]? Furthermore, the *rūpakāyas* also would not be separate *kāyas*, because they would be the nature of those undefiled dharmas,

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[7] Tsong kha pa's expression "*jñānakāya*" ("*yeshe kyi sku*") is an abbreviation for Haribhadra's *jñānātmaka dharmakāya*, the fourth *kāya* consisting of gnosis (*dharma*), distinct from the *svābhāvikakāya* which the emptiness of that gnosis(*dharmatā*).

and [Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta] have themselves asserted that the undefiled dharmas are not a separate *kāya*.[8]
(6) But if the undefiled dharmas are the *svābhāvikakāya*, are they unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) or conditioned (*saṃskṛta*)? If they are conditioned, it would contradict [Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's] reliance for quotations upon Āryā Nāgārjuna and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, since those two textual sources assert that the *svābhāvikakāya* is unconditioned and permanent by nature. This would damage the positions of both Ratnākaraśānti and his follower (Abhayākaragupta).[9] It would do [particular] damage to Abhayākaragupta's position, since he explained the *svābhāvikakāya* as unmade and without any creator (even the path) in accord with [Ārya Vimuktisena's explanation in the] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti*.[10] But if the undefiled dharmas were held to be unconditioned, then the two *rūpakāyas* would likewise be unconditioned, as there would be no difference in the reasoning.[11]

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[8] Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta had said that the undefiled dharmas were not to be distinguished as separate from the *svābhāvikakāya* (see chapter 11, secs. 4 and 5). Tsong kha pa is saying here that if the undefiled dharmas were identified with the *rūpakāyas*, then the *rūpakāyas* too could no longer be distinguished as separate from the *svābhāvikakāya*. This argument is beside the point, since neither Ratnākaraśānti nor Abhayākaragupta identified the undefiled dharmas with the *rūpakāyas* (Ratnakīrti did, but Tsong kha pa's argument here is not intended for him and does not address his position; since Ratnakīrti, by including the undefiled dharmas in the *sāmbhogikakāya*, did hold them to be separate from the *svābhāvikakāya*, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-vṛtti kīrtikalā*, Pk 5197, fol. 183-2-7 to 2-8).

[9] Both Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta quoted the *Trikāyastotra* (ascribed by them to Nāgārjuna) and the *MSA* in order to show that only three (never four) Buddha *kāyas* were taught throughout *Pāramitānāya* (non-Tantric) Mahāyāna Buddhist literature. Tsong kha pa is saying that these texts teach the *svābhāvikakāya* as unconditioned and permanent by nature, which for him implies that it is emptiness as distinct from gnosis. See below.

[10] This is probably a reference to Abhayākaragupta's definition of *svābhāvikakāya* in his *Munimatālaṃkāra* (Pk 5299, fols. 232-3-6 to 3-7) which is modelled on Ārya Vimuktisena's explanation of *svābhāvikakāya* as uncreated and obtained by the bodhisattva path but not made by it (Pk 5185, fols. 92-4-8 to 5-2). On Ārya Vimuktisena's explanation, see chapter 9, sec. 3 above.

[11] Tsong kha pa understands the *svābhāvikakāya* (as Haribhadra defined it) to be the *dharmatā* (unconditioned) nature of the undefiled *dharmas* ( Buddha's gnosis) and of the *rūpakāyas* (which are generated by that gnosis). Tsong kha pa is saying that three-*kāya* interpreters of the *AA* such as Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta identify the undefiled *dharmas* with the *svābhāvikakāya* because it is their *dharmatā* (their emptiness). But then by the same logic, the *rūpakāyas* must also be identified with the

(7) Furthermore, [those who claim that the undefiled dharmas were not taught separately in the Philosophical Vehicle as a *jñānakāya*] must explain how they do not contradict Vasubandhu's description of the *dharmakāya* as containing both conditioned and unconditioned components.[12]

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*svābhāvikakāya*, since the latter is also their *dharmatā*. But then if the undefiled *dharmas* are said to be unconditioned because they are one with the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *rūpakāyas* would have to be unconditioned for the same reason.

12 Tsong kha pa refers here to a passage ascribed to Vasubandhu by Abhayākaragupta in his *Munimatālaṃkāra* (Pk 5299, fol. 232-2-7 to 3-4). Abhayākaragupta noted that some scholars referred to a passage ascribed to Vasubandhu in their support of Haribhadra's positing four *kāyas*. Abhayākaragupta paraphrases Vasubandhu as having said the following. A Buddha possesses just three *kāyas*: *dharmakāya*, *sāmbhogikakāya*, and *nairmāṇikakāya*. But the *dharmakāya* has an unconditioned and a conditioned aspect. The unconditioned aspect is purified suchness (*tathatāviśuddhi*), and it is that alone which ultimately is understood to be the nature of a Buddha. The conditioned aspect comprises the conditioned dharmas (the ten powers, etc.) through which a Buddha obtained buddhahood in the pure realm of *Akaniṣṭha* (*Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fol. 225a2 to a6).

Supporters of Haribhadra contend that this passage implicitly teaches four *kāyas*, since the *dharmakāya* is divided into an unconditioned and a conditioned aspect. But Abhayākaragupta says that the conditioned aspect was meant to be included within the unconditioned aspect of the *dharmakāya*, and that even in this passage only three *kāyas* are taught. For according to Abhayākaragupta's remarks later in the *Munimatālaṃkāra*, the differentiation of the undefiled dharmas is just a conventional designation upon the *svābhāvikakāya* made by non-Buddhas, a conventional designation which is based upon the conditioned mental qualities a yogi used to have prior to obtaining buddhahood. And according to the passage ascribed to Vasubandhu above, the "conditioned" aspect of *dharmakāya*, comprising the undefiled dharmas, consists of those dharmas through which buddhahood was obtained, but is not the actual nature of a Buddha once enlightenment (as *tathatāviśuddhi*) has been obtained (see chapter 11, sec. 5 above).

Tsong kha pa here refers us to this passage as textual support for Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory. Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta claimed that the undefiled dharmas were taught nowhere in *Pāramitānāya* literature as a fourth *kāya* until Haribhadra introduced that theory. Abhayākaragupta's paraphrase of Vasubandhu above is the only textual evidence Tsong kha pa presents for a four *kāya* theory in *Pāramitānāya* other than his earlier quote of *AA* vs. 8.6.

Tsong kha pa's argument would be weightier if somebody could find the text by Vasubandhu in which the passage is supposed to exist, and if a direct quotation more directly supported Haribhadra's position. No one, to my knowledge, has been able to identify that text. The fact that Tsong kha pa points only to this arcane text (which comes down to us through a paraphrase of Abhayākaragupta's) indicates that he can find no other *sūtra* or *śāstra* in the entire *Pāramitānāya* tradition prior to Haribhadra which explicitly teaches a fourth *kāya*. And that would tend to further support the claim of Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta that no such fourth *kāya* was ever taught in *Pāramitānāya*. Of course, Tsong kha pa's main reasons for supporting Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory (like Haribhadra's own reasons) were inferential, not textual. Still he

(8) [Supporters of Ārya Vimuktisena, Ratnākaraśānti, and Abhayākaragupta] could raise the following objection: "[Your four *kāya* interpretation] of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is not correct. For if it were correct, the *AA* would have to be expressing a [fourth] *kāya* when it uses the expression "*dharmakāya*" in [vs. 1.17], the table of contents [for *AA* chapter 8]. But that is not so, because the [*AA's*] table of contents [vss. 1.5-1.16] states the name of the realization (*abhisamaya*) which is the title for every one of the other seven chapters, e.g. "the total omniscience of the Sage," etc. In the same way [when vs. 1.17 of the table of contents says "*dharmakāya*," it is stating the name of the realization which is the title of the 8th chapter, not the name of a fourth *kāya*.]

(9) It may appear as though this objection were true. But within the body of *AA* chapter 8 [in vs. 8.6], a *dharmakāya* is taught as a separate *kāya*. And when we make an inferential analysis of the sort presented above, [we do find that a separate *dharmakāya* consisting of a Buddha's undefiled dharmas] must be posited as a [fourth] *kāya*, because it can not be posited as any of the other three *kāyas*. Therefore, we must hold that the expression "*dharmakāya*" in [vs. 1.17] of the table of contents teaches [two things at once]: the general realization [of *dharmakāya phalam* as the title of *AA* chapter 8] and one out of four *kāyas* [the *jñānadharmakāya*]. After all, what is achieved by reasoning should not be overturned by words [alone], and it is evident that one word [can] express many meanings.

This quotation presents Tsong kha pa's principal reasons for choosing Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of the *AA* over that of Ārya Vimuktisena and others.

*Paragraph* (1): First, Tsong kha pa says that Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's fundamental objection to Haribhadra was entirely scriptural, i.e. Haribhadra's fourth *kāya* consisting of gnosis (*jñānakāya*) is not to be accepted because no such fourth *kāya* was taught in the *sūtras*

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couldn't resist pointing to Abhayākaragupta's paraphrase of Vasubandhu as textual support. And this shows us how little textual support he really had. See below.

and *śāstras* of *Pāramitānāya* Buddhism (the non-Tantric system of Buddhism, based upon *sūtras* and their *śāstras*, which includes texts such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, and *AA*). In fact, as we noted in chapter 11 above, Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta had a much more substantial objection to Haribhadra's interpretation. In Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's view, Haribhadra had taken the conceptual distinctions that philosophers make between gnosis and *dharmatā*, conventional and ultimate truth, and had imputed that conceptual differentiation to a Buddha's own realization. By doing so, in their view, Haribhadra had mistaken his own conceptualization about buddhahood for the realization of buddhahood itself, in which such conceptually constructed distinctions are no longer made. Because buddhahood per se was a yogic realization, not the logical construct Haribhadra had made of it, the authoritative scriptures which describe it (*sūtras* as the word of Buddha and *śāstras* by great yogis) were to be given great weight. Therefore, Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's main objection to Haribhadra was not scriptural. Their main objection was that his four-*kāya* theory constituted a mistaken conceptualization of buddhahood. Then the fact that it was never taught in *Pāramitānāya* was cited to support that.

Tsong kha pa, either not acknowledging or not recognizing the substance of Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's argument, reduced their objection to a scriptural one alone: i.e. the claim that Haribhadra's four *kāyas* should not be accepted because they were never taught in *Pāramitānāya* (while the four *kāyas* taught in *Mantranāya* were posited on a different basis than Haribhadra's). Tsong kha pa's reasons for

supporting Haribhadra, then, take the form of a specific rebuttal to that scriptural objection.

*Paragraph* (2): Tsong kha pa must now confront the fact that there is very little (perhaps no) direct scriptural evidence that a Buddha's gnosis per se was ever explicitly taught as a separate, fourth *kāya* in the *Pāramitānāya* tradition prior to Haribhadra. The only direct scriptural evidence Tsong kha pa can point to is vs. 8.6 of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* itself. In the Tibetan translation of that verse, it appears to be saying that the undefiled dharmas (from the factors which foster enlightenment to total omniscience) "are called the *dharmakāya*." And this seems to identify the set of undefiled dharmas explicitly as a separate, fourth *kāya* called "*dharmakāya*," a *kāya* consisting of gnosis. Tsong kha pa therefore claims that it is Haribhadra who read the *AA* literally and straightforwardly, and that interpreters such as Ārya Vimuktisena who etymologize "*dharmakāya*" as "*dharmatākāya*" (to equate it with *svābhāvikakāya*) were interpreting the *AA* loosely.

However, as we saw in chapter 8 above (sec. 6), the Sanskrit of *AA* vs. 8.6 is far less straightforward than Tsong kha pa thought. A more accurate translation of vss. 8.2-8.6 from the Sanskrit indicates that those verses list the twenty-one types of undefiled dharma and then conclude in vs. 8.6: "thus is the *dharmakāya* denominated." One distinctly possible meaning would be that the *dharmakāya* (which is the *svābhāvikakāya* of vs. 8.1), is conceptualized and denominated as the collection of undefiled dharmas (but it is not defined by that collection, having passed beyond all such conceptual differentiation). This, in fact, was Ārya Vimuktisena's

interpretation of vs. 8.6. And it was a natural one, because it conformed to the understanding of the terms "*svābhāvikakāya*," "*dharmakāya*," and "undefiled dharmas" as they were used throughout the multiple *kāya* textual traditions of his period and earlier. Furthermore, Ārya Vimuktisena's etymological explanation of *dharmakāya* as "*dharmatākāya*" (to show its synonymy with *svābhāvikakāya*) also conformed to the textual traditions of three *kāyas* contemporaneous and prior to him, traditions which most certainly contributed to the composition of the *AA* (see chapter 9, sec. 3 above).

It is true that even the Sanskrit of vs. 8.6 is ambiguous enough to permit different interpretations (otherwise Haribhadra would have been unable to promulgate his interpretation at all). But Tsong kha pa's remarks above indicate that he was misled by his reading of the Tibetan into thinking that Haribhadra's interpretation of vs. 8.6 was the most literal and straightforward, when in fact, the Sanskrit indicates that Ārya Vimuktisena's was at least as likely. Furthermore, as we noted in chapter 8 above, there are many other pieces of philological evidence which overwhelmingly support the conclusion that the *AA's* 8th chapter teaches three *kāyas* (see chapter 8, secs. 2-6 above). Some of that philological evidence appears clearly only in the Sanskrit original, not in the Tibetan translation (see chapter 8, sec. 6. above), and thus was apparently unavailable to Tsong kha pa.

*Paragraphs* (3) - (4): In fact, then, *AA* vs. 8.6 provides no real philological support for Haribhadra. But it was Tsong kha pa's only direct textual evidence to refute Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's

claim that Haribhadra's fourth *kāya* of gnosis had never been taught in *Pāramitānāya* literature. Probably sensing how little textual evidence he had for his position, Tsong kha pa tries to establish that a fourth *kāya* of gnosis must have been implied in texts prior to Haribhadra even if it was never actually named. This would mean that it had been expressed in *Pāramitānāya* texts implicitly, even if not explicitly. His method mirrors that of Haribhadra before him. Haribhadra used logical inference to establish that a fourth *kāya* of gnosis must be posited. Given that, he concluded, it must have been taught in the *AA* even if the verses were ambiguous. Tsong kha pa uses the same logical inference to posit the same fourth *kāya*, but then concludes not only that it must have been taught in the *AA*, but that it must have been taught throughout *Pāramitānāya* literature, even if it was not explicitly called a "*kāya*." This will be elaborated below.

Tsong kha pa asks us to look closely at Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's claim that a fourth *kāya* of gnosis was never taught in *Pāramitānāya* literature before Haribhadra. He argues that even when a thing is not explicitly named, it may often be taught implicitly. Therefore, the fact that a name like "*jñānakāya*" (gnosis *kāya*) was not used prior to Haribhadra does not mean that what the name refers to was never taught.

This is certainly true. Still, it should give a scholar pause that in the entire history of *Pāramitānāya* (*sūtra/śāstra*) Mahāyāna Buddhism prior to Haribhadra no one had thought to explicitly separate gnosis from emptiness as a separate *kāya* in its own right and designate it as such. An

historical-critical scholar would naturally want to ask why. Tsong kha pa, however, never asked that question. He was looking at Indian intellectual history through the filter of Haribhadra's point-of-view. He therefore assumed that Haribhadra's logico-Mādhyamika concerns and assumptions had always been operative throughout the earlier history of Mahāyāna thought. Given that non-historical perspective, it seemed more reasonable to Tsong kha pa to argue that Haribhadra's four *kāyas* had always been implicitly taught, than to seek the reason why they were never explicitly taught.

*Paragraphs* (5) - (7): Having established that a separate *kāya* of gnosis could have been taught implicitly in *Pāramitānāya* without being named, Tsong kha pa then argues that it had to have been taught implicitly. And like Haribhadra before him, his argument is inferential rather than textual. He says that if the undefiled dharmas as gnosis were never taught (even implicitly) as a separate *kāya* prior to Haribhadra, then they would have to have been identified with one of the three *kāyas* which were taught. That would mean that the undefiled dharmas were either identified with the *rūpakāyas* (*sāmbhogikakāya* and/or *nairmāṇikakāya*) or with the *svābhāvikakāya*. Ārya Vimuktisena, Ratnākaraśānti, and Abhayākaragupta all identified them with the *svābhāvikakāya*.

But, Tsong kha pa's argument goes, the undefiled dharmas can not be identified with the *svābhāvikakāya*. Because the former are conditioned and the latter is described in the various Mahāyāna textual sources as "uncreated," "permanent by nature," etc. which indicates it is unconditioned. One thing can not be both conditioned and unconditioned.

Therefore, the conditioned dharmas (i.e. a Buddha's conditioned gnosis) can not be identified with the *svābhāvikakāya* which is unconditioned. If, on the other hand, it is said that the undefiled dharmas are unconditioned (because the the unconditioned *svābhāvikakāya*, as their emptiness, is their ultimate nature), then the *rūpakāyas* would have to be unconditioned for the same reason. This would be unacceptable to all parties, because the *sāmbhogikakāya* manifests in the conditioned world to teach bodhisattvas in pure realms, and *nairmāṇikakāyas* (such as āSākyamuni) are observed to arise and pass away.

Tsong kha pa's basic point is the same as Haribhadra's before him. In Tsong kha pa's view, in accord with basic logic, a single thing is either unconditioned or conditioned, not both. Authoritative Mahāyāna texts describe the *svābhāvikakāya* as unconditioned. As such, it can not serve as a cause for the manifestation of the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* (the *rūpakāyas*). The cause for those manifestations must be a Buddha's conditioned gnosis (his primary consciousnesses and mental factors, i.e. the undefiled dharmas). But Buddha's gnosis, being conditioned, can not be identified with the *svābhāvikakāya* which is unconditioned. And being the unmanifest cause of the *rūpakāyas*, it can not be identified with them either. Thus, Buddha's gnosis itself comprises a fourth *kāya*.

As we discussed in chapter 10 above, Haribhadra used the same inference in order to posit his fourth *kāya*. He then applied that inference toward a specific hermeneutic purpose: the interpretation of *AA* 8. He inferred that the author of the *AA* must have intended four *kāyas*.

Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta, however, later attacked Haribhadra partially on the grounds that four such *kāyas* were never taught anywhere in the *Pāramitānāya* tradition of which the *AA* is a part. As noted above (and in chapter 11), Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta had other substantial reasons for rejecting Haribhadra's interpretation, but Tsong kha pa chose only to focus on that scriptural objection.

In order to refute Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's scriptural objection, therefore, Tsong kha pa employed Haribhadra's same logical reasoning to infer a fourth *kāya*. But whereas Haribhadra had applied that reasoning toward the interpretation of the *AA* alone, Tsong kha pa wanted to use it to support a wider hermeneutic claim: the claim that a fourth *kāya* of gnosis was always implicitly taught throughout the *Pāramitānāya* textual tradition (which includes the various Mahāyāna *sūtras* and their principal *śastras* such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, *DDV*, *AA*, etc.). Therefore, Tsong kha pa, having posited Buddha's gnosis as a fourth *kāya* through reason, concludes that the authoritative Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* had always taught such a fourth *kāya*. For, in Tsong kha pa's view, wherever those texts taught about a Buddha's gnosis, they were implicitly teaching about a fourth *kāya* consisting of that gnosis. It was not necessary for the texts to have called Buddha's gnosis a "gnosis *kāya*" to have been teaching it implicitly as a distinct *kāya* all along.

We noted in chapter 10 above that Haribhadra's inferential argument against Ārya Vimuktisena involved two crucial mistaken assumptions. First, he assumed that Ārya Vimuktisena distinguished the *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone, distinct from gnosis. This was not the case (see

chapters 9 and 10 above). Secondly, he assumed that whoever accepted the existence of Buddha's activity in the world had to agree that a Buddha possessed conditioned sense consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*) necessary to generate such activity. This assumption, too, was incorrect (see chapter 10, sec. 3 on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-25a6).

Tsong kha pa repeated Haribhadra's logical inference based on a similar set of mistaken assumptions. But because Tsong kha pa applied that inference toward a larger hermeneutic purpose than Haribhadra's (i.e. to prove that a fourth *kāya* had been taught, not only in the *AA*, but implicitly throughout *Pāramitānāya* literature), the implications of those assumptions become much broader.

Tsong kha pa's assumptions are as follows. First, Tsong kha pa assumed that although emptiness is unconditioned, a Buddha's gnosis was generally accepted in *Pāramitānāya* to be conditioned (like any other form of consciousness). Given that assumption, Tsong kha pa assumed that when *Pāramitānāya* texts such as the *MSA* described the *svābhāvikakāya* as "permanent by nature," "unconditioned," etc., they were in effect saying that the *svābhāvikakāya* was emptiness alone, distinct from gnosis. Tsong kha pa also assumed that it was generally accepted in *Pāramitānāya* that a Buddha's activities in the world had to be based upon sense consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*), which would mean that a Buddha's mind was a conditioned, conventional entity. Therefore, a Buddha's realization must contain within it an unconditioned part (which was emptiness, ultimate truth) and a conditioned part (which

was gnosis, the undefiled dharmas, conventional truth), distinguished as such within a Buddha's own awareness.

If these assumptions of Tsong kha pa's had been shared by all the *Pāramitānāya* textual traditions (of the *PP* and other Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and *śāstras* such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, *DDV*, *Trikāyastotra*, etc.), then without question he would have proved his point. Because his assumptions already contain within them the substance of a four *kāya* theory. Contained in those assumptions is the identification of *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness distinct from gnosis. That leaves the gnosis logically separate from *svābhāvikakāya*. And once gnosis is logically separated from *svābhāvikakāya*, it can not be identified with *sāmbhogikakāya* or *nairmāṇikakāya*, since it is their cause, and since it is perceived directly only by Buddhas (while *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are distinguished by being cognitive objects for *ārya bodhisattvas* and lesser beings respectively, *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fols. 232b5-6, 241a3-b5; *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4).

It is quite possible that the Haribhadra's concern to delineate more clearly the unconditioned (ultimate truth) and conditioned (conventional truth) aspects of buddhahood was a concern that developed gradually in Indian Buddhism, finally taking explicit form in Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8. Hsuan tsang (a Chinese scholar who studied at Nālandā in the 7th century), in his *Vijñaptimatratāsiddhi*, presents a theory of buddhahood which makes a similar distinction between conditioned and unconditioned aspects of buddhahood, (although within the context of an overall three *kāya* scheme, Poussin, pp. 704-706; 790-

791). And as Tsong kha pa noted, the passage paraphrased by Abhayākaragupta (ascribed to Vasubandhu) delineates a conditioned and an unconditioned aspect of *dharmakāya.* The text from which this passage was taken remains unidentified, but it may represent an attempt similar to Haribhadra's in later Indian Buddhism to sort out conditioned and unconditioned aspects of buddhahood in a way that separated gnosis from emptiness within a Buddha's realization (Since Abhayākaragupta lived in the 12th century, his ascription of the text to Vasubandhu does not carry much historical weight until we can identify the text). Dharmamitra's comments also pointed to Haribhadra's teacher Vairocana as a formulator of four *kāya* theory, which may indicate a gradual development which culminated in Haribhadra's explicit expression of that theory in his interpretation of the *AA*.

However, Tsong kha pa intended his argument to prove that a separate gnosis *kāya* had been implied not just in a few texts leading up to Haribhadra's own interpretation, but in *Pāramitānāya* literature as a whole. *Pāramitānāya* literature includes texts such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, etc. and their commentaries, texts in which the theory of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* was formulated and first explicated in detail. And these texts did not share several of Tsong kha pa's crucial assumptions.

As outlined in chapters 4 and 5 above, three-*kāya* texts like the *MSA*, *Msg*, etc. never distinguished gnosis from emptiness to identify *svābhāvikakāya* as emptiness alone (distinct from gnosis). To do so would have made no sense, since *svābhāvikakāya* was understood

precisely as the non-dual realization which was free of all such conceptually constructed distinctions as "gnosis" and "emptiness." In those texts, abstract terms like "*tathatāviśuddhi*," and "*nirvikalpajñāna*" were common epithets for a Buddha's realization precisely because they pointed to a non-dual comprehension in which suchness (*tathatā*) and gnosis (*jñāna*) were no longer differentiated (see chapter 4, sec. 6 above). Buddha's realization was held to be literally non-dual, with no distinction possible (within a Buddha's own awareness) between gnosis and emptiness.

In fact, throughout the buddhological traditions of *Pāramitānāya* prior to Haribhadra (which have been surveyed in chapters three through nine above), it was inconceivable to claim that a Buddha distinguished gnosis from emptiness as separate things within his own awareness. Such a distinction could only be made conceptually, and would therefore constitute precisely the kind of discursive conceptualization (*vikalpa*, *prapañca*) which a Buddha was said to have personally passed beyond. A Buddha's cognition of the phenomenal world was said to be based upon his non-conceptual gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (universal emptiness). The texts acknowledged that such a realization was difficult for us to comprehend. It was for precisely that reason that a Buddha's realization was described throughout the literature as (quite literally) inconceivable and beyond precise ascertainment through inference (see chapter 5, secs. 2. through 4. above).

Furthermore, a Buddha's activities, based also upon that non-conceptual gnosis (together with the force of prior vows, Buddha's

blessing, etc.) were said to manifest spontaneously and uninterruptedly in accord with the capacities and needs of beings. As noted in chapter 5, sec. 3 above, Yogācāra commentaries specifically raised the question of how buddhahood, consisting of non-conceptual gnosis, can carry out activities for sentient beings when it is free of their conceptualizations. This is acknowledged to be a difficult question, not answerable by attempting a detailed analysis of a Buddha's awareness (which is beyond our ken). Therefore, the answer these texts gave was not that a Buddha possesses the sense consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*) necessary to generate activity. The answer was given in the form of analogies like that of the legendary wish granting gem, which fulfills wishes without thinking. Like the wish granting gem, it is said, a Buddha's activity is utterly automatic. As we also noted in chapter 10 above, Candrakīrti (a seventh century Mādhyamika) explicitly stated that a Buddha's gnosis is free of sense consciousnesses and mental factors, having become cognitively one with thatness (*tattvam*, = suchness, emptiness). For precisely that reason, in order to explain how a Buddha's non-conceptual gnosis can be the basis of universal activity, Candrakīrti relies on the familiar analogy of the wish granting gem (*Madhyamakāvatāra*, Poussin edition, pp. 357-363).

Therefore, several of Tsong kha pa's key assumptions run directly counter to those held by the authors of fundamental *Pāramitānāya* texts (from the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, etc. up to the commentaries of Ārya Vimuktisena, Candrakīrti, Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta). First, Tsong kha pa assumed that where these texts describe the *svābhāvikakāya*

as "permanent by nature," "uncreated," or "unconditioned," they meant it in the strict logical sense employed later by Haribhadra, which would imply that *svābhāvikakāya* was emptiness alone (distinct from gnosis). As noted in chapters 5, 9 and 10 above, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* (prior to Haribhadra) was routinely described as "permanent," "uncreated," or "unconditioned" in several broad senses, none of which implied that it was to be understood as emptiness alone (distinct from gnosis). Universal suchness or emptiness is uncreated. *Svābhāvikakāya*, as the non-dual gnosis of universal suchness, then, is unconditioned in its cognitive identification with suchness and in its permanent cessation of the obscurations which prevented such an identification. Suchness was always there. It was never created. Therefore the *svābhāvikakāya*, as the revelation of universal suchness, is obtained by the yogic path, but not created by it. Further, the important Yogācāra model of innate, pure, luminous mind (*cittaprakṛtiviśuddhi*) also implied the uncreatedness of the *svābhāvikakāya*. For the *svābhāvikakāya* represented the removal of what had hidden the mind's innate pure luminosity, not the creation of something new. None of these earlier ways to understand the *svābhāvikakāya* as uncreated, permanent or unconditioned required that it be understood as emptiness alone (logically separate from gnosis).[13]

Tsong kha pa's second assumption was to assume, like Haribhadra, that a Buddha's activity in the world necessitated sense consciousnesses and mental factors (*cittacaitta*), and to conclude from that that a Buddha's

[13] Cf. gYag ston, *bLo gsal mgul rgyan*, fol. 1274b, lines 2-4.

mind was a conditioned, conventional entity, distinguished as such within Buddha's own awareness. Tsong kha pa took those mental factors, the undefiled dharmas, to be a real, conventional, conditioned component of a Buddha's own realization (distinguished as such by Buddha himself). As noted just above, the fundamental *Pāramitānāya* texts prior to Haribhadra did not explain Buddha's activity in terms of sense consciousnesses and mental factors, but only in terms of broad analogies like that of the wish fulfilling gem. The reason was that the actual content of a Buddha's awareness was understood to be epistemologically exclusive, not ascertainable by assuming that a Buddha's mind works like ours (see chapter 5, secs. 2 and 3 above).

And as we explored at some length in chapter 4 above, texts explicitly warned against defining a Buddha's own realization per se in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas. The collection of undefiled dharmas was understood to comprise a phenomenal description of a Buddha's realization, a description conceptualized from the point-of-view of ordinary beings. A Buddha's own realization, the real essence of buddhahood (*svābhāvikakāya*, Essence Body), was understood to be the non-dual gnosis of suchness which had passed beyond all such conceptualization. It was this essence which was identified as *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*, not the collection of conceptually differentiated undefiled dharmas (see chapter 4, especially secs. 2 and 3 above). Therefore, again, it made no sense whatsoever from the perspective of earlier *Pāramitānāya* traditions to posit the collection of undefiled dharmas per se as a separate *kāya*. In those traditions the list of

dharmas just represented the way ordinary beings conceptualize *svābhāvikakāya*, not some distinct component of Buddha's realization which is supposed to be separate from *svābhāvikakāya.*

Given the fact that Tsong kha pa's key assumptions were not shared by the fundamental Mahāyāna textual traditions prior to Haribhadra, his argument utterly fails to prove that a fourth *kāya* (consisting of the undefiled dharmas) was implicitly taught throughout the *Pāramitānāya* tradition. Within the main Mahāyāna textual traditions, the undefiled dharmas were not generally considered an accurate description of a Buddha's realization from a Buddha's own point-of-view until Haribhadra himself stipulated them as such (chapter 10, sec. 2, *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 24b3-24b4). Therefore, there was no basis to distinguish the undefiled dharmas per se as a *kāya* distinct from *svābhāvikakāya* until Haribhadra himself did so. Historically speaking, Tsong kha pa would have been better served by seeking to discover why the textual traditions prior to Haribhadra had not made such a distinction, rather than seeking to project that distinction into those earlier traditions.

*Paragraphs* (8) - (9): Be that as it may, Tsong kha pa believed that his arguments above proved that Haribhadra's fourth *kāya* was taught throughout the *Pārami*ʻ*ānāya* tradition (at least implicitly), and in particular (based on his reading of *AA* vs. 8.6), that it was taught in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra.* Like Haribhadra before him, Tsong kha pa realized how little direct textual support he had for all this. It behoved him to respond to a philological objection. Therefore, he next acknowledges a

philological criticism by an opponent, who argues, based on the *AA's* table of contents, that the *AA* teaches only three *kāyas*.

*AA* vs. 1.17 is the final verse of the *AA's* table of contents, summarizing the content of *AA* chapter 8. It reads as follows:

> *svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
> *dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//* *AA* 1.17
>
> In its essence, with its enjoyment, and in its emanation as well.
> The *dharmakāya*, with its activity, is proclaimed as four-fold.
> *AA* 1.17

If the term "*dharmakāya*" in this verse does not refer to the *dharmakāya* as the title for *AA* chapter 8 (i.e. as *dharmakāyaphalam*, "resultant *dharmakāya*," which includes all *kāyas* and all aspects of buddhahood), then vs. 1.17 would be the only part of the *AA's* table of contents which leaves out the title of its corresponding chapter. Therefore, the objector says, the term "*dharmakāya*" in the verse must refer to the title of *AA* chapter 8, not to a *[jñāna] dharmakāya* as a fourth *kāya*. This means that vs. 1.17 teaches three *kāyas* (*svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, and *nairmāṇika*) with the fourth term "*dharmakāya*" serving only as the title of chapter 8 (semantically inclusive of all three *kāyas*). Since vs. 1.17 is the table of contents for *AA* chapter 8, the latter must also be teaching three *kāyas*.[14]

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[14] See chapter 8, sec. 2 above for a detailed grammatical analysis of this verse. The very argument presented above is one of many we raised in chapter 8, sec. 2. to establish that *AA* vs. 1.17 does indeed teach only three *kāyas*.

To his credit, Tsong kha pa acknowledges the power of this argument. But relying heavily on his inferential argument above (according to which a fourth *kāya* of gnosis must have been taught throughout *Pāramitānāya*, including the *AA*), combined with his understanding of *AA* vs. 8.6's Tibetan translation (according to which the word "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 8.6 explicitly designates that fourth *kāya*), he concludes that the *AA* was indeed teaching four *kāyas*. Therefore, he decides, the term "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 1.17 must refer simultaneously to the title of chapter 8 (*dharmakāyaphalam*) and to the [*jñāna*]*dharmakāya* which is the fourth of four *kāyas* taught in chapter 8.

As was the case with *AA* vs. 8.6, Tsong kha pa read vs. 1.17 in its Tibetan translation, which looks like this:

*ngo bo nyid longs rdzogs bcas dang/*
*de bzhin gzhan pa sprul pa ni/*
*chos sku mdzad pa dang bcas pa/*
*rnam pa bzhir ni yang dag brjod//* Tibetan *AA* 1.17

The special adjectival morphologies of Sanskrit terms and the number of the Sanskrit verb were lost in the Tibetan, giving Haribhadra's four *kāya* reading of the verse more plausibility than it has in the Sanskrit.[15]

But even reading the verse only through the Tibetan translation, Tsong kha pa should have asked himself this question: Precisely what does vs. 1.17 proclaim "as four-fold" ("*rnam pa bzhir ni yang dag brjod*")? If it is "*dharmakāya*" ("*chos sku*"), and if, as Tsong kha pa claims, that term

[15] See chapter 8, sec. 6 above for a fuller discussion of the hermeneutical problems created by the Tibetan translation of key verses such as 1.17 in the *AA*.

refers simultaneously to both *dharmakāyaphalam* and *[jñāna] dharmakāya*, then the verse proclaims both as four-fold. In that case, according to the verse, both have four aspects: *svābhāvika*, *sasāmbhoga*, *nairmāṇika* and *kāritra* (three *kāyas* plus activity). Then *dharmakāyaphalam* would still be proclaimed to include just three *kāyas* plus activity ("*jñānātmaka*" is still not listed among its four aspects). And in addition, *[jñāna] dharmakāya* would also be proclaimed to include those three *kāyas* plus activity. Haribhadra's four-*kāya* interpretation of the *AA* is hard to defend on philological grounds even based upon the Tibetan translation of that text. Based upon the Sanskrit, it becomes impossible to defend. The reader is referred to chapter 8 above for a fuller philological analysis of the verses relevant to an interpretation of *AA* 8.

Within the Buddhist tradition, fundamental doctrines can only be established if they can be traced, at least by implication, to the teachings of the Buddhas (as recorded in the *sūtras*) and to the authoritative *śāstras*. It is understood that the fundamental formulation of the essential truths of Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths, were expressed in those texts. And those truths, together with their implications, comprise the teaching of Buddhism. Within the Buddhist tradition, any doctrine that can not be traced to the truths expressed in those texts, at least by implication, is simply not accepted as Buddhist doctrine. There lies the force of Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's criticism that Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory was never taught in the *Pāramitānāya* (*sūtra/śāstra*) tradition of Buddhism until Haribhadra himself introduced it.

Tsong kha pa, as a supporter of Haribhadra, felt compelled to refute that charge. But his arguments failed to do so. As we noted in chapter 10 above, Haribhadra's *kāya* theory did in fact comprise a new normative theory of buddhahood, a theory generated by the application of 8th century logic and Mādhyamika thought to the unique textual material of the *AA*. The reason, then, that Tsong kha pa could not refute Ratnākaraśānti's and Abhayākaragupta's criticism was simple: their criticism had been correct. A fourth *kāya* of gnosis was not taught in the the *AA*, and was not generally taught in the *Pāramitānāya*, until Haribhadra himself introduced it.[16]

Still, even though any attempt (such as Tsong kha pa's) to defend Haribhadra's theory through fallacious historical inferences must fail, that in itself does not mean that the theory is without validity. As we noted in chapter 10, Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8 represented a legitimate Mādhyamika attempt to correct problems perceived in the tri-*kāya*

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[16] Although four *kāyas* were taught in the *Mantranāya*, Abhayākaragupta's observations there were incisive. The four *kāyas* of *Mantranāya* were posited in a special context of Tantric practise, where practitioners discursively distinguished gnosis from emptiness in their conceptualization of buddhahood (during initiation rites, etc.) in order to take buddhahood into their path of practise. But Haribhadra posited not merely that practitioners distinguished a fourth *kāya*, but that a Buddha himself, within his own personal realization, makes such a discursive distinction. This, according to Abhayākaragupta, was done neither in *Pāramitānāya* nor in *Mantranāya* (see chapter 11, sec. 5 above). In Abhayākaragupta's view, Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory was introduced into *Pāramitānāya* as a normative theory of buddhahood through Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8. And though the same four *kāyas* were taught in *Mantranāya*, they were taught not as a normative theory of buddhahood per se but as a method of conceptualizing buddhahood for special purposes of practise.

In defense of Haribhadra, Tsong kha pa says that Haribhadra only claimed that his theory was consistent with the *Mantranāya's* having taught four *kāyas* in general, not that it conformed precisely to the *Mantranāya* mode of explaining them (*Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, fol. 227a2-3). But this does not specifically address Abhayākaragupta's points.

buddhology that had been inherited from Yogācāra. That attempt in its own right was certainly based on valid philosophical concerns. In particular, there was the age-old Mahāyāna paradox of non-abiding *nirvāṇa*: how can buddhahood be understood as both unconditioned and operative within conditions? Haribhadra's theory addressed this problem directly, by taking buddhahood as an object of logical analysis, and then sorting incompatible (unconditioned and conditioned) aspects into their separate domains. The Yogācāras had left this problem unresolved. They did so intentionally, because they understood this problem to be based on the more fundamental problem of how buddhahood could reconcile, within one undivided realization, both phenomenal (conditioned) and ultimate (unconditioned) reality. And in the Yogācāra texts, this was said to be resolvable only through personal yogic realization, not through speculative schemes (see chapters 5, 10 and 11 above). In essence, the argument between those who later supported Haribhadra (such as Tsong kha pa) and those who criticized him was a disagreement over the extent to which buddhahood per se was accessible to logical analysis, comprehensible through ordinary epistemological categories, and expressible in language.

Tsong kha pa supported Haribhadra's theory because his own philosophical concerns mirrored Haribhadra's. Tsong kha pa also wanted to clearly distinguish the conditioned aspects of buddhahood from the unconditioned aspects in accord with Madhyamaka analysis, and thereby to identify within Buddha's realization the conditioned basis for his activity in the world. But this concern was probably part of a more

general concern of Tsong kha pa's, one which took form within the context of his own time and place. Tsong kha pa's more general concern was to affirm the reality (though not the ultimacy) of conventional truth, to give conventional truth the ontological status necessary for Buddhists in Tibet to take moral discipline and graduated practise seriously.

One important issue in Tibet, ever since the introduction of Buddhism in the 7th and 8th centuries, was the philosophical foundation of Buddhist practise. There had always been an ongoing tension within Buddhist Tibet between two basic traditional approaches to enlightenment. The first type of approach put its emphasis on a gradual path of practise which was intended to generate the extensive merit and wisdom causes that would finally produce enlightenment. The second type of approach put more emphasis on the notion of an innate enlightenment, an innate *dharmakāya* inherent to beings, which was revealed through the purifying practise of the path, but was not actually created by the path. The former type of tradition tended to emphasize the graduated path schemes that were passed on to Tibet from the Yogācāra and Mādhyamika traditions of late Indian Buddhism, while the latter type of tradition tended to put its emphasis on the *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha nature) teachings of Buddhism. One tradition of the latter type was a Chinese Ch'an tradition which exerted influence in the early stages of Buddhist transmission to Tibet. According to later Tibetan accounts, this tradition, represented by a monk referred to as Ho-shang Mahāyāna, rejected moral conduct and conceptual analysis as a route to enlightenment, on the grounds that such practises take place under categories of conceptualization and conventional truth

which further bind one to *saṃsāra*. Another tradition of the latter type known as "*gZhan stong*" (empty-of-other) seemed to deny all reality to conventional truth per se in its affirmation of an absolute principle, free of all phenomenal aspects, which comprised an enlightenment inherent to all beings. The early proponents of this system seemed (to their opponents) to deny any reality to the conventional world in which moral discipline and graduated practise could take place.[17]

Tsong kha pa was one of Tibet's most influential proponents of the first type of tradition above: the tradition of graduated practise which Tibet inherited from late Indian Buddhism. He was famous for his emphasis on strict moral discipline, long periods of formal study, and a graded development of meditative practises. He and his followers were staunch advocates of the graded systems of practise which were passed to Tibet through late Indian masters such as Kamalaśila and then systematized in Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradipa* and in Tsong kha pa's own giant, synoptic treatise, the *Lam rim chen mo*. In Tsong kha pa's view, although the capacity to achieve enlightenment was innate, enlightenment per se was not. Like any other phenomena, enlightenment was produced from its own proper causes, those causes being the practises which generated merit and wisdom. Those practises were based on firm moral

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[17] See Ruegg, *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective* (1989) for up-to-date bibliography and extensive discussion on the significance of the legendary debate between Ho-shang Mahāyāna and Kamalaśīla in 8th century Tibet. On the Jo nang pas as promulgators of *gZhan stong* thought, see Ruegg's *La Theorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra*, pp. 60-61, "The Jo nang pas," JAOS 1963, pp. 73-91, and the introduction to Ruegg's *Le Traite du Tathāgatagarbha de Bu ston Rin chen grub.*

discipline. And all such practise and discipline took place within the realm of conventional truth. If, in a misdirected Buddhist zeal to affirm ultimate truth over conventional truth, the latter was accorded too little reality, there would be no basis to take spiritual discipline and practise itself seriously. It was in this broader context of concern that many of Tsong kha pa's hermeneutical decisions on Indian Buddhist texts were made, including, quite possibly, his decision to follow Haribhadra's interpretation of *AA* 8.

Recall that Haribhadra's central argument for a fourth *kāya* of gnosis begins with the observation that a Buddha acts in the world through the manifestation of his *rūpakāyas*. The *rūpakāyas*, as phenomenal manifestations, are conditioned. Then they must have a conditioned cause within Buddha's realization that generates them. And that cause would be Buddha's undefiled dharmas, his gnosis per se, taken as a conditioned, conventional entity. Tsong kha pa, in defending Haribhadra, supports this reasoning. But to ask for the cause (in buddhahood) of the *rūpakāyas* is already to assume that the *rūpakāyas* have enough reality, enough ontological status, to seek an underlying cause for them in a Buddha's own realization. At the core of Tsong kha pa's concern to defend Haribhadra is an ontological seriousness about the *rūpakāyas* which was lacking in earlier Mahāyāna buddhological traditions.

In the tri-*kāya* formulations prior to Haribhadra, Buddha's gnostic realization per se was understood to have become epistemologically one with the realm of ultimate truth, the *dharmadhātu*. And that non-dual gnosis of ultimate truth was what buddhahood actually was, its essence,

the *svābhāvikakāya*. Based on that realization, and through the force of prior vows, blessing, etc., pervasive manifestations miraculously appeared in the phenomenal realm of conventional truth to carry out activities for beings, those manifestations being the *rūpakāyas*. But buddhahood, ontologically speaking, was just the *svābhāvikakāya*. The *rūpakāyas* were merely phenomenal appearances of buddhahood as it was conceptually constructed by sentient beings. Causes for the *rūpakāyas'* manifestation in the phenomenal world were located in that world: Buddha's prior vows and merit (when he was a bodhisattva on the path), the karmic purity of beings, etc. But precise causes for the *rūpakāyas* within a Buddha's personal gnostic realization (which was transmundane) were never sought (see chapter 5, secs. 3 and 4 above).

Within the tri-*kāya* traditions prior to Haribhadra, the question was never raised as to what comprised a conditioned cause of the *rūpakāyas* within a Buddha's realization per se. Why not? Because in those traditions the *rūpakāyas* were not given sufficient ontological status for scholars to even think of raising the question. The *rūpakāyas* were, in essence, miraculous appearances. Similarly, the list of undefiled dharmas were not taken as the real constituents of a Buddha's personal realization. They were characterized merely as a phenomenal conceptualization of a Buddha's realization as ordinary beings attempted to grasp what was really inconceivable.

In the tri-*kāya* traditions, then, the *rūpakāyas* (and the undefiled dharmas) were ontologically insignificant relative to the *svābhāvikakāya*. In part, this stemmed from the philosophical and gnoseological context in

which the tri-*kāya* theory was operative. This context granted conventional truth in general only a provisional ontological status which disappeared within the realization of ultimate truth. According to the Mahāyāna path system, when *ārya bodhisattvas* enter their meditative equipoise directly cognizing ultimate truth (emptiness), conventional truth per se no longer appears. They have a non-conceptual gnosis of ultimate truth alone. Through the force of that, when they leave their meditative equipoise, their cognition of conventional truth is altered, so that the dualistic appearance of conventional phenomena seems like an illusion. *Ārya bodhisattvas*, then, alternate between their meditative equipoise on ultimate truth, in which conventional truth does not appear at all, and periods of activity in the phenomenal world, in which conventional truth does appear, though in an illusory manner (see chapter 5, sec. 4 above). When ultimate truth is directly realized, conventional truth loses its provisional ontological status.

But when n *ārya bodhisattva* finally achieves full enlightenment and becomes a Buddha, he no longer alternates between periods of meditation on ultimate truth and periods of activity in the world. A Buddha's direct realization of ultimate truth, as his defining feature (the *svābhāvikakāya*), never ceases. A Buddha never leaves his "meditation" on ultimate truth. A Buddha's mind becomes epistemologically one with universal emptiness (the *dharmadhātu*) and all else that a Buddha knows or does is based upon that. Therefore, in the early Mahāyāna *śāstras*, a Buddha's knowledge of the phenomenal world (conventional truth) was not specified as an awareness of phenomena qua phenomena, but as an awareness of

phenomena based upon his awareness of ultimate truth (the *dharmadhātu*, universal suchness). A Buddha's knowledge of the phenomenal world was understood as an expression of his knowledge of the *dharmadhātu*, the latter knowledge being the fundamental one (on this, see especially chapter 5, sec. 4 and chapter 9, sec. 2 above). Thus, gnoseologically, a Buddha's awareness of the phenomenal world was only an expression of a more fundamental awareness, his non-conceptual gnosis of the ultimate nature of that world. And theologically, a Buddha's *rūpakāyas* which manifest in the phenomenal world were just an appearance, conceptually constructed by the unenlightened, of the non-conceptual *svābhāvikakāya*.

But it appears that by Haribhadra's time, the *rūpakāyas* were accorded enough ontological status (at least in some Mādhyamika circles) for Haribhadra to plausibly ask for their cause within a Buddha's own realization. And similarly, the undefiled dharmas per se were accorded much greater ontological status as the actual content of a Buddha's gnosis, such that a Buddha perceived his own realization in terms of them (see chapter 10, sec. 3 and chapter 11, sec. 4 above). In essence, Haribhadra tracked conventional truth itself right into the core of buddhahood in a way that had not been done earlier.

Tsong kha pa, in supporting Haribhadra, also assumed that the *rūpakāyas* had enough ontological status to seek their cause within a Buddha's own realization. Following the thread of that concern, he (like Haribhadra) identified the undefiled dharmas as a conditioned, conventional component of a Buddha's own realization. The undefiled dharmas were distinguished (as conventional truth) from their *dharmatā*

(as ultimate truth) precisely through their appearance as a conventional object to Buddha's own direct awareness (*Legs bshad gser 'phreng*, 232b1-b6). This anchored conventional truth itself right in the core of a Buddha's own realization. In the tri-*kāya* traditions, Buddha's mind was inseparable from ultimate truth. In Tsong kha pa's scheme (following Haribhadra), Buddha's mind was now identified in its own right as a conventional, conditioned entity, distinct from ultimate truth, and suitable to be identified as a fourth *kāya*.

Furthermore, since, according to Tsong kha pa's scheme, a Buddha's omniscient awareness discursively distinguishes between the phenomenal and the ultimate aspects of its own realization, it would follow that it similarly distinguishes directly the phenomenal and ultimate aspects of all other things. In that case, a Buddha's awareness of the phenomenal world is no longer understood merely as an expression of his non-dual gnosis of its suchness, but is on equal terms with it. A Buddha doesn't cognize phenomena through his gnosis of their suchness. He cognizes phenomena qua phenomena, just like he cognizes their suchness qua suchness. Then conventionalities (as *pratītyasamutpāda*), like their suchness, are equally validated by a Buddha's direct cognition. And this would grant to conventionalities per se (as *pratītyasamutpāda*) an ontological status on a par with their suchness. Through all this, there is no implication that conventionalities exist independently as ultimates. But there is the implication that conventionalities, as dependent existents (empty of independent or ultimate existence), are validated by a Buddha's direct cognition just as much as their emptiness.

It is in this way that Tsong kha pa's choice of Haribhadra's *AA* 8 interpretation fit into his overall concern to affirm the reality of conventional truth as the basis of spiritual practise. For Haribhadra's theory granted the undefiled dharmas (as conventional truth) the ontological status conferred by a Buddha's direct cognition. And this, by implication, granted to conventional truth in general that same ontological status.

Tsong kha pa pursues this theme further in his commentary on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra.* In one portion of his comments on the *buddhabhūmi* section of that text, Tsong kha pa speculates on the mechanism of a Buddha's awareness (*dGongs pa rab gsal*, pp. 458-461). He puts aside Candrakīrti's text for a little while and makes primary reference instead to Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayavibhaṅga* (ca. early 8th century). Tsong kha pa presents the theory that conventional truth per se, just as much as ultimate truth, is validated by a Buddha's direct cognition. According to Tsong kha pa, a Buddha's gnosis perceives all conventional phenomena and their emptiness (conventional truth and ultimate truth) equally at once. A Buddha cognizes all conventional phenomena dualistically (i.e. with epistemological subject and object appearing as separate), since in Tsong kha pa's interpretation of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka metaphysics, that is how conventionalities exist. But a Buddha cognizes ultimate truth (emptiness) non-dualistically (with no separation between subject and object), since that is how it is directly realized in yogic cognition (in the direct realization of ultimate truth, gnosis enters its object indivisibly "like water poured into water"). This

means that, according to Tsong kha pa, a Buddha cognizes conventional truth (dualistically) qua conventional truth, and ultimate truth (non-dualistically) qua ultimate truth. Implicitly, then, Tsong kha pa grants to conventional truth per se an ontological status on a par with ultimate truth, since both are equally validated by Buddha's direct knowledge. Again, this does not imply that conventional truth is independently or ultimately existent. But it does imply that conventional truth, in spite of its emptiness of ultimate existence, is quite real. And therefore to engage in immoral conduct, or to engage in spiritual discipline, has real consequences: a bad rebirth on the one hand, progress toward enlightenment on the other.[18]

It should be noted that Tsong kha pa's gnoseology, according to which Buddha's knowledge of conventional truth per se is as fundamental as his knowledge of ultimate truth, represents a departure from the gnoseology of the tri-*kāya* Mahāyāna *śāstras* (such as the *MSA*, *RGV*, *Msg*, *DDV*, etc.) which made Buddha's gnosis of ultimate truth his fundamental cognition (see the previous few pages above, and chapter 5, sec. 4). It also departs from Candrakīrti's own text, which conforms

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[18] *dGongs pa rab gsal*, pp. 458-459: "*bden gnyis rang 'grel las/ mkhyen pa'i skad cig gcig gis ni/ shes bya'i dkyil 'kkhor kun khyab can/ zhes gsungs pa ltar yin pas mnyam gzhag gi ye shes de las ngo bo tha dad pa'i ji snyed pa mkhyen pa'i rjes thob kyi yeshes med pai' phyir na/ ye shes gcig gis bden pa gnyis kyi shes bya thams cad mkhyen par 'dod dgos so/ gang gi tshe chos nyid la ltos te ji lta ba mkhyen pa'i ye shes su song ba de'i tshe blo de'i ngor gnyis su snang ba thams cad nye bar zhi ba/ ye shes de chu la chu bzhag pa bzhin du ro gcig tu zhugs pa yin la/ gang gi tshe chos can la ltos te ji snyed pa mkhyen par song ba de'i tshe/ yul yul can so sor snang ba'i gnyis snang yod kyang/ gnyis snang 'khrul pa'i bag chags drungs phyung pas snang yul la ma 'khrul pa'i gnyis snang yin gyi 'khrul pa'i gnyis snang min te/....*

significantly to other tri-*kāya* texts in its theory of Buddha's gnosis (see chapter 9, sec. 2 above). This will be further discussed below.

3. Go ram pa's Buddhology

Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge (1429-1489) was one of the most influential scholars of the Sa skya sect. He wrote two important commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, known as the *Yum don rab gsal* and the *sBas don zab mo'i gter.* We will focus mainly on the latter commentary, as it is held to more properly represent Go ram pa's own mature views, and is written in a clear expository style. Rong ston shes bya kun rig (1367-1449), a teacher of Go ram pa, also ranks as one of the greatest Sa skya scholars. One of Rong ston's teachers, gYag ston sangs rgyas dpal (1350?-1414), is regarded in the Sa skya tradition as one of Tibet's most profound commentators on *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. Go ram pa's views were undoubtedly influenced by both Rong ston and gYag ston. Another great Sa skya scholar, Ngag dbang chos grags (1572-1641), wrote sub-commentaries on Go ram pa's major works, and is often referred to by Sa skya scholars in their study of Go ram pa's works.[19]

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19 The information in this paragraph was culled from discussions with the Venerable Mig mar Tse ring and other Sa skya scholars at the Tibetan Institute, Sarnath, India; from reading the commentaries of Rong ston and gYag ston on *AA* 8 whose themes Go ram pa takes up in his commentaries, and from Gene Smith's prefaces to *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentaries of gYag ston and Rong ston: *gYag ston sher phyin mngon rtogs rgyan 'grel bzhugs so*, Vol. 2 (New Delhi, Ngawang Topgay, 1973), p.1; *Roṅ-ston Śes-bya-*

In the 8th chapter of his *sBas don zab mo'i gter*, Go ram pa presents his reasons for choosing the three-*kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8 over Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation. Like Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta before him, Go ram pa repudiates Haribhadra's four *kāya* theory both as alien to the *Pāramitānāya* tradition in general, and as an inaccurate interpretation of the *AA* in particular.

His comments on *AA* chapter 8 begin with a brief overview of the different ways of enumerating the Buddha *kāyas* in various *Pāramitānāya* texts. Of particular interest are his comments on buddhahood enumerated as just one *kāya* (a mode of presenting buddhahood which Tsong kha pa had not discussed)[20]:

> In the holy *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* [*sūtra*] it is said: "That which abides merely as thatness (*tattvam*) and the accurate gnosis [of it] (*samyagjñāna*) is called the *dharmakāya*, since it is free from all moral obstructions and has completed all virtuous qualities. The former two [*kāyas*, i.e. the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya*] are merely designated (*btags pa ba*) [as Buddha *kāyas*]. The *dharmakāya* is the actual one (*yang dag pa*), because it serves as the basis of those [other] two *kāyas*. Why? Because apart from the suchness of phenomena (*dharmatathatā*) and the non-conceptual gnosis [which realizes it] (*nirvikalpajñāna*), there are no other qualities of the Buddhas."[21] In the [8,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā*] *sūtra*, the section on the moderately weak aspiration for others' benefit, it is said: "Bhikṣus, do not adhere to this body as [my] actual body (*satkāya*, *sku dam pa*). Bhikṣus, look upon me as the perfected *dharmakāya*." Some translations

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*kun-rig's Study of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (New Delhi, Ngawang Topgay, 1972), preface.

20 *sBas don zab mo'i gter*, fols. 215a6-b4.

21 Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*, p. 43, lines 22-29. Go ram pa's quote is close, but not identical in wording, to Nobel's critical edition of the Tibetan translation. He may have been using a different translation.

[of the same *sūtra* passage] have it: "Bhikṣus, without looking upon me as a body which is a perishing collection, look upon me as the perfected *dharmakāya*."[22] On the meaning of this, the *Āloka* says that [Buddha's] admonition not to adhere to the perishing collection, beautified by the blazing marks and signs, as his body means that the two *rūpakāyas* are only nominal Buddha bodies [*btags pa ba*], while the *dharmakāya* alone is the actual [Buddha] body [*mtshan nyid pa*].[23]

Ngag dbang chos grag's comments on this discussion of Go ram pa's are important[24]:

> Concerning the enumeration [of buddhahood] in one *kāya*, from a Buddha's own point-of-view (*rang snang la*), all Buddha bodies (*kāyas*) are just the *dharmakāya*. This is so because a Buddha, from his own point-of-view, perceives only the *dharmakāya*, not the bodies which are perishing collections (i.e. not the *rūpakāyas*). ... [Ngag dbang chos grag quotes the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* and 8,000 *PP sūtra* passages given by Go ram pa above, and then quotes the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*:] As it says in the *Vajracchedikā*: "Whoever sees me as [my] form, whoever knows me as [my] voice, have entered a mistaken path. Those beings do not see me." But are the *rūpakāyas* then not bodies of Buddha? They are Buddha bodies, because they are the fruition of meditating on the four yogic practises (*catvāraḥ prayogāḥ*) and are thus resultant *dharmakāya* (*dharmakāyaphalam*). Nevertheless, the scriptural passages quoted above mean that from a Buddha's own point-of-view (*rang snang la*), apart from the *dharmakāya* alone, there are no *rūpakāyas*.

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22 This quote occurs in the 8,000 *PP sūtra*, Wogihara, p. 268, translated in Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, p. 116.

23 Go ram pa appears to be paraphrasing Haribhadra's comment in *Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 270, lines 1-3. He quotes Haribhadra's comment directly below when discussing the distinction between the *rūpakāyas* as nominal Buddha *kāyas* and the *dharmakāya* as the only actual Buddha *kāya*.

24 *Kun mkhyen bla ma'i dgongs don rab gsal* (Ngag dbang chos grags' subcommentary on Go ram pa's *sBas don zab mo'i gter*), fols. 171b6-172a5.

Go ram pa, having explained buddhahood as one *kāya* (i.e. the *dharmakāya*), then briefly summarizes its presentations as two *kāyas* and three *kāyas* in various *Pāramitānāya* texts (the *Ratnagotravibhāga* which presents buddhahood both ways, and the *MSA*, *Msg*, *and Abhidharmasamuccaya*, which present three *kāyas*). Go ram pa says that most *Pāramitānāya* texts (i.e. most Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*) teach three *kāyas*. He then notes that some scholars (i.e. Haribhadra and his followers), in their comments on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, divided buddhahood into four *kāyas*, and that some later commentators, based upon that, further divided it into five (by dividing the *sāmbhogikakāya* or the *nairmāṇikakāya* into two types). Go ram pa says that such enumerations of buddhahood in four or five bodies just involve "the expansion or contraction of one's conceptual categories," i.e. that such enumerations just represent further discursive elaboration on the part of scholars. He notes that the earlier great Sa skya master, bSod nams rtse mo (1142-1182), refuted such scholars when he said that in the *Pāramitānāya* four gnoses and three *kāyas* are taught, while it is a distinctive feature of the *Vajrayāna* (*Mantranāya*) alone to enumerate buddhahood in terms of five gnoses and four *kāyas*.[25] This hearkens back to the criticisms by Ratnākaraśānti and Abhayākaragupta we noted earlier (chapter 11 above).

A little later in his *sBas don zab mo'i gter,* Go ram pa further pursues the question of what it means for the *rūpakāyas* to be only "nominal"

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[25] *sBas don zab mo'i gter*, fols. 215b4-216a5. Go ram pa is referring to bSod nams rtse mo's *rGyud sde sphyi'i rnam gzhag*.

bodies of a Buddha (*btags pa ba*), while the *dharmakāya* is the "actual" body of a Buddha (*yang dag pa*, *mtshan nyid pa*), given the fact that many tri-*kāya* texts simply refer to all three *kāyas* as "bodies of Buddha":[26]

> Some textual traditions explain that the bodies (*kāyas*) of a Buddha are [actually] three; but some explain that the two *rūpakāyas* are only nominal bodies [of a Buddha, i.e. that there is only one actual Buddha body, the *dharmakāya*].
>
> How is this to be understood? The essential point is this. From a Buddha's own point-of-view (*rang snang la*), he exists as the *dharmakāya* alone, which is the realm of reality (*dbyings*, *dhātu*) and gnosis (*ye shes*, *jñāna*) in one taste. This is so, because from his own point-of-view, he is fully enlightened with respect to all that is to be known as the realm of reality and gnosis in one taste which is the *dharmakāya*.
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> With this meaning, the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* explained the other two *kāyas* [the *rūpakāyas*] to be [merely] nominal (*btags pa ba*). That *sūtra* also says: "The two [*rūpa*] *kāyas* are not to be referred to as '*nirvāṇa*,' because there is no Buddha other than the *dharmakāya*. Why aren't the two [*rūpa*] *kāyas* to be referred to as '*nirvāṇa*'? Those two *kāyas* are not the actual [Buddha] but merely nominally so; therefore every moment they arise and cease without existing as permanent." And the *Vajracchedikā* says: "The Bhagavan said: 'Subhuti, it is thus. Do not view the *tathāgata* by reference to his excellent marks. Subhuti, if he was a *tathāgata* by virtue of his excellent marks, a universal emperor [who also possesses such marks] would also be a *tathāgata*. Therefore, do not view the *tathāgata* by reference to his excellent marks." The *Vajracchedikā* then presents a verse on the meaning of that: "Whoever sees me as [my] form, whoever knows me as [my] voice, has entered a mistaken path. That being does not see me."
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> However, from the point-of-view of trainees (*gdul bya'i gzhan snang gi dbang du byas nas*), even the two *rūpakāyas* are actual [not just nominal] Buddha bodies, because from within the trainees' perspective, there have to be actual (*mtshan nyid pa*)

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26 *sBas don zab mo'i gter*, fols. 216a6-217b3.

Buddha bodies carrying out the enlightened activities. And those, the trainees must postulate, are the two *rūpakāyas* which appear to their own minds. It is with this understanding that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* divides [buddhahood] into the self-benefit ultimate body (*rang don don dam pa'i sku*) and the other-benefit conventional body (*gzhan don kun rdzob pa'i sku*), where the activity carried out by the latter is posited as the activity of Buddha. Yet, the latter body is merely the reflection of the former body, the former body being the actual one. This is explained extensively there. ... .

Here in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the context is one in which the twenty-seven enlightened activities are related to the three *kāyas*. Therefore the text follows the point-of-view of the trainees in explaining even the two *rūpakāyas* as actual bodies of Buddha. This is because, [from the trainees' point-of-view,] apart from the two *rūpakāyas*, there is no other Buddha who is [observed to be] carrying out the activities.

In sum, when explaining a Buddha's own mode of existence, the *dharmakāya* alone is the only actual Buddha body, because in that context, even the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are posited as the three latter gnoses [of a Buddha, i.e. the gnosis of equality, the gnosis which examines, and the gnosis which accomplishes activities], rather than as bodies of form adorned with marks and signs. But when explaining the way a Buddha carries out activity from the point-of-view of the trainees, the two bodies of form adorned with the marks and signs are also posited as actual Buddha bodies, because the context of discussion is [Buddha's] mode of appearance within the awareness of the trainees. And from the trainees' point-of-view, the two bodies of form appear to be Buddha.

As it says in the *Āloka*, commenting on the section of the [8,000 verse *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*] concerning the moderately weak aspiration for others' benefit: "The *rūpakāya* (body of form) of the *tathāgata*, seen by fortunate sentient beings, blazing with the marks and signs, is not really the teacher, the *dharmakāya*. Nevertheless, by the power of the *dharmakāya*, which is endowed with a collection of limitless supreme stainless qualities, the [sentient beings'] own awareness appears in the form of such a *rūpakāya*."[27] And in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* it says: "For example, based upon the sky, lightening occurs.

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[27] Haribhadra's *Āloka*, Wogihara, p. 270, lines 1-3.

Based upon lightening, light occurs. Likewise, based upon the *dharmakāya*, the *sāmbhogikakāya* occurs. Based upon the *sāmbhogikakāya*, the *nairmāṇikakāya* appears."

Go ram pa's analysis of buddhahood here hearkens back to the basic formulation of *dharmakāya* in the *PP sūtras* and of *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* in the Yogācāra *śāstras* (which we examined in chapters 3,4,and 5 above). In both of these textual traditions (which are included in what late Indian Buddhists called "*Pāramitānāya*"), buddhahood per se was identified as ontologically one: simply the *dharmakāya*. Ontologically, buddhahood was a non-dual, undifferentiated realization of universal suchness. Though ordinary beings might conceptualize buddhahood in terms of the list of undefiled dharmas or the *rūpakāyas*, the actual realization of buddhahood was known only to a Buddha. And that realization, having passed beyond all such conceptual differentiation, was referred to in the *PP sūtras* as "*dharmakāya*." Because that non-dual, undivided gnosis of suchness itself comprised the essence (*svabhāva*) of buddhahood, the Yogācāra tradition referred to it also as "*svābhāvikakāya*," "Essence Body." Other common terms for it in Yogācāra texts were "*dharmakāya*," "*anāsravadhātu*," "*dharmadhātuviśuddhi*," *nirvikalpajñāna/tathatāviśuddhi*, etc.

Because that one, undivided realization alone comprises what a Buddha actually is as personally realized; buddhahood, ontologically speaking, is that alone. Enlightenment exists in its own nature as an entity known only to Buddhas, the unmanifest *dharmakāya*. As noted in chapter 4, sec. 4 and chapter 5, sec. 2 above, the two types of *rūpakāya*

were distinguished from the *dharmakāya* not ontologically, but epistemologically. The *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* were different ways the *dharmakāya* (known only to a Buddha) manifested to different types of trainees. The basic tri-*kāya* structure of Yogācāra, which was later also adopted by Mādhyamikas prior to Haribhadra, centered on the ontological oneness of Buddha's personal non-dual realization, the *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya*. Based upon that, the two *rūpakāyas* were delineated epistemologically (following the expressions of Mahāyāna *sūtras*) according to the two basic ways in which that one, unmanifest essence appeared to others (as a glorified Buddha form in a pure realm or as limitless emanations into the worlds of beings; see chapters 3-5 above). Go ram pa's quotes from the *sūtras* and *śāstras* above are intended to remind us that, according to these fundamental *Pāramitānāya* traditions, buddhahood is ontologically only one *kāya*, the *dharmakāya* alone. And the *rūpakāyas* are merely the way that one *kāya* appears to non-Buddhas under their own conceptual categories. However, he uses the expressions "*yang dag pa*" and "*tshan nyid pa*" to refer to the *dharmakāya* as "actual," "real," and the expression "*btags pa ba*" to refer to the *rūpakāyas* as "nominal," "designated" to the real. This terminology appears to be derived from the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*.

The *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* has one chapter devoted to the theory of three *kāyas* ("*sKu gsum rnam par 'byed pa'i leu*" in Tibetan translation). That chapter may be a late addition to the *sūtra*, since it is missing in the Sanskrit manuscript of the *sūtra* preserved in Nepal and in the earliest Chinese translation (Dharmakṣema's, ca. 414-433 CE), appearing only in

Chinese translations from the 6th century CE.[28] The chapter on the three *kāyas* appears in two of the three Tibetan translations of the *sūtra*. That chapter appears to have been composed based upon texts such as the *MSA*, *Msg*, since it goes into further detail on many of the buddhological issues which were raised in briefer form in those texts. In the Tibetan translation which Go ram pa is quoting, the explicit terms "*btags pa tsam*" (merely nominal, *prajñaptimātra*) and "*yang dag par yod pa*" (really or actually existent, *samyaksat*) are applied to the *rūpakāyas* and the *dharmakāya* respectively. The *sūtra* goes on to say that the *dharmakāya* is the only actual *kāya*, because in reality, all of buddhahood is included within the suchness and non-conceptual gnosis which comprises the *dharmakāya*. Such explicit terminology as "actual" vs. "nominal" did not appear in earlier Yogācāra tri-*kāya* literature (though, as Go ram pa notes, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* did use the analogous terms "*paramārthakāya*," ultimate *kāya*, and "*saṃvṛtikāya*," conventional *kāya*), but the implication that buddhahood was ontologically *dharmakāya* alone was clear, and the tri-*kāya* chapter of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* makes that more explicit.[29]

Because Go ram pa has drawn the distinction between actual and nominal Buddha bodies with reference to the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* and certain passages in the *PP sūtras*, he must account for the fact that texts

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28 Demieville, "Busshin," p. 180. The Tibetan translations are Pk 174-176.

29 Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*, p. 43. This discussion in the *sūtra* appears to be closely related to similar discussions in the *Kāyatrayāvatāramukhaśāstra* by Nāgamitra (Pk 5290) and *Kāyatrayavṛtti* by Jñānacandra (Pk 5291), where it is also said that apart from *tathatāviśuddhi* and *nirvikalpajñāna* (which comprise the *dharmakāya*) there are no other qualities of the Buddhas, for which reason the *rūpakāyas* are merely nominally existent (*btags pa'i yod*) while the *dharmakāya* is ultimate and real (*don dam pa*), Pk 5290, fol. 119-1-4 to 6. This would be a good topic for further research.

such as the *AA* (*Msg*, etc.) teach three *kāyas* without explicitly declaring one "actual" and the others "nominal." The *rūpakāya* (body of form), says Go ram pa, appears to be the actual Buddha from the point-of-view of the trainees who come into contact with it. Therefore, in texts which explain buddhahood in a way which explicitly takes the trainees' point-of-view into account, the *rūpakāyas* are taught simply as Buddha bodies without declaring them as "merely nominal." This is particularly the case in the *AA*, where much emphasis is placed on a Buddha's activity which is carried out, from the perspective of trainees, entirely by the *rūpakāyas*. From the trainees' point-of-view (*gzhan snang*), then, the *rūpakāya* is Buddha. From a Buddha's own point-of-view (*rang snang*), his actual nature is beyond the comprehension of the trainees, being the unmanifest *dharmakāya* alone.

Go ram pa never denies that the *dharmakāya* gives rise to the *rūpakāyas*, as his last quote from the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* indicates ("Based upon the sky, lightening occurs," etc.). Therefore, he never denies that the *rūpakāyas*, based as they are upon the *dharmakāya*, are to be included within buddhahood. But he does deny the *rūpakāyas* the ontological status of the *dharmakāya*. Ngag dbang chos grags comments quoted earlier were intended by him to clarify that point, because Go ram pa's mode of expression might otherwise leave him open to the charge that he denies the *rūpakāyas* are Buddha at all, in which case the *sūtras* taught by figures such as Śākyamuni would not be the word of Buddha. According to Ngag dbang chos grags, Go ram pa's point is that the *rūpakāyas* are nominal aspects of buddhahood precisely because they are designated by

trainees with the *dharmakāya* as basis, the *dharmakāya* being the only actual ontological material of buddhahood.[30]

In the next to last paragraph of his remarks above, Go ram pa makes some interesting observations. Recall in chapter 5, sec. 4 above, we observed that the four gnoses taught in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (vss. 9.67-76) were identified by later commentators with the three *kāyas*. In particular, the gnosis of equality (*samatājñāna*) and examining gnosis (*pratyavekṣājñāna*) were identified with the *sāmbhogikakāya*, while the gnosis which accomplishes activities (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*) was identified with the *nairmāṇikakāya*. Go ram pa makes the interesting claim that this is done in the context of explaining a Buddha's own mode of existence. From a Buddha's own perspective, all aspects of himself are actually just aspects of his non-dual gnosis. Texts which identify the Buddha gnoses above with the *rūpakāyas*, then, are emphasizing the fact that a Buddha, though conceptualized by non-Buddhas in terms of form, is actually only non-dual gnosis. In Go ram pa's view, then, other textual passages in which the *rūpakāyas* are presented as bodies of Buddha with the marks and signs, etc. (earlier in the *MSA*, in the *AA*, *Msg*, etc.) are assuming the perspective of the unenlightened. For unenlightened beings only know buddhahood through the forms which appear to them, those forms being the way buddhahood manifests to their own minds.

Go ram pa's comments above establish the framework in which his analysis of *AA* 8 will take place. In Go ram pa's view, the fundamental

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30 See Ngag dbang chos grags, *Kun mkhyen bla ma'i dgongs don rab gsal*, fols. 173a6-174b6.

Mahāyāna textual traditions all identified buddhahood ontologically as the *dharmakāya* alone. It was only the *dharmakāya* which comprised the actual essence of a Buddha: a non-dual, undifferentiated realization of universal suchness (*nirvikalpajñāna/dharmadhātu*). From a Buddha's own point-of-view, then, the *dharmakāya* was undivided. Since from Buddha's own point-of-view there was only one, indivisible *kāya* (*dharmakāya*), and the two *rūpakāyas* were posited from the points-of-view of two types of trainees, those traditions taught three *kāyas* as the normative description of buddhahood. Go ram pa saw the *AA* as one more expression of those textual traditions. And because the *AA* was in fact composed based upon those traditions (the *PP sūtras* and the tri-*kāya* traditions of Yogācāra), he was predisposed toward an accurate analysis of it.

In Go ram pa's view, to divide the *dharmakāya* into two separate aspects (gnosis distinct from suchness) and posit them as two separate *kāyas* from a Buddha's own point-of-view (as Haribhadra and Tsong kha pa had done) was to run counter to the entire tradition of buddhology of which the *AA* was a part. It is for this reason that, prior to analyzing *AA* 8 per se, Go ram pa put so much emphasis upon identifying the *dharmakāya* as the one indivisible essence of Mahāyāna buddhology, the ontological core of buddhahood which is undifferentiated from a Buddha's own point-of-view.

Go ram pa now turns to the *AA* proper. He presents Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* 8, give reasons for rejecting it, and then argues for Ārya Vimuktisena's three *kāya* interpretation. Go ram pa's criticisms

of Haribhadra in the *sBas don zab mo'i gter* focus on Haribhadra's four *kāya* interpretation of *AA* vs. 1.17 (the table of contents for *AA* 8). According to Haribhadra, remember, the term "*dharmakāya*" ("*chos sku*") in vs. 1.17 designated a fourth *kāya* of gnosis rather than the title of *AA* chapter 8 (see chapter 8, sec. 2 and chapter 10, sec. 3 above):

*svābhāvikaḥ sasāmbhogo nairmāṇiko 'paras tathā/*
*dharmakāyaḥ sakāritraś caturdhā samudīritaḥ//*
Sanskrit *AA* 1.17

*ngo bo nyid longs rdzogs bcas dang/*
*de bzhin gzhan pa sprul pa ni/*
*chos sku mdzad pa dang bcas pa/*
*rnam pa bzhir ni yang dag brjod//.* Tibetan *AA* 1.17

In its essence, with its enjoyment, and in its emanation as well,
*Dharmakāya*, with its activity, is proclaimed as four-fold.
*AA* 1.17

Go ram pa points out the relationship between *AA* vs. 1.4 (which names *AA* chapter 8 "*dharmakāya*") and vs. 1.17, noting that if "*dharmakāya*" in vs. 1.17 is not the title of *AA* 8, it would be the only part of the *AA's* table of contents not to name its chapter. Go ram pa argues that it makes no sense to say, as Haribhadra did, that "*dharmakāya*" appears last in verse 1.17 to associate Buddha's activity with the his gnosis alone, since, by Haribhadra's own admission, the activities are carried out through the manifestation of the *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* as well (see chapter 10, sec. 3 on *Sphuṭārthā*, Amano, 1983, fols. 25a6-25a7). Go ram pa also notes that the particle "*ni*" in the Tibetan translation of vs. 1.17 functions grammatically to

identify the three *kāya* terms (*"ngo bo nyid," "longs rdzogs bcas,"* and *"sprul pa"* = *"svābhāvika," "sasāmbhogaḥ," "nairmāṇikaḥ"*) as a group with the term *"chos sku"* (= *"dharmakāya"*), which should mean that the latter term is used in its inclusive sense, designating buddhahood as a whole (*dharmakāyaphalam*), not just one out of four *kāyas*. Go ram pa then presents Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation, which he accepts. He says that in Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation, the *svābhāvikakāya* of *AA* vs. 8.1 includes not only the innate and adventitious purity of Buddha's gnosis (as Haribhadra had distinguished them, chapter 10, sec. above), but also the gnosis itself. *AA* vss. 8.2-8.6 then elaborate the content of the gnosis, and conclude with the identification of *svābhāvikakāya* (inclusive of the gnosis and its purity) as *"dharma[tā]kāya"* (see chapter 9, sec. 3 above).[31]

In one section of his *Yum don rab gsal*, Go ram pa performs a masterful philological analysis in which he points out the relationships between the uses of the term *"dharmakāya"* throughout the entire *AA*: *AA* vss. 1.4, 1.17, 8.6, 8.40 and 9.2. Since, as he demonstrates, the term *"dharmakāya"* is used in its inclusive sense in vss. 1.4, 1.17, 8.40 and 9.2 (*dharmakāyaphalam* inclusive of three *kāyas*), and in its exclusive sense in vs. 8.6 (as a synonym for *svābhāvikakāya*), the *AA* is indeed a three *kāya* text. His analysis is based entirely on the Tibetan translation of the

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[31] *sBas don zab mo'i gter*, fols. 218a2-219b5. Go ram pa's grammatical analysis of *AA* vs. 8.6 is not completely accurate, because he relied only on the Tibetan translation of the verse without the Sanskrit. In particular, he read too much into the use of the Tibetan term *"dang"* (Sanskrit *"ca"*) in the Tibetan translation of the verse (fol. 219b3-b4). However, this did not effect the validity of his extensive other criticisms of Haribhadra's interpretation (presented above and in his *Yum don rab gsal*).

text, and therefore ignores the evidence of the Sanskrit (discussed in chapter 8 above) and the historical-critical considerations noted in chapter 7 above (which further support his interpretation). Nevertheless, because he interprets key verses such as vs.1.17 and vs. 8.6 in relation to the structure of the *AA* as a whole (not just through Haribhadra's peculiar readings taken in isolation from the rest of the text), he arrives at the philologically correct conclusion that the *AA* teaches three *kāyas*.[32]

In the previous section of this chapter, we observed how Tsong kha pa's interpretation of *AA* 8 rested on a set of assumptions which derived from Haribhadra's interpretation of that text. Go ram pa's interpretation of *AA* 8, on the other hand, understood that text as one particular expression of the basic buddhology common to many Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* of its time and after. Tsong kha pa read *AA* 8 through Haribhadra's perspective, and then tried to justify that reading by projecting that particular perspective back into earlier textual traditions where it had not been operative. Go ram pa, on the other hand, read *AA* 8 in relation to the other Mahāyāna textual traditions of its time and after, and then evaluated Haribhadra's and others' interpretations of it in that

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32 *Yum don rab gsal*, especially fols. 309a2-b4. Go ram pa incisively points out the logical relationships between *AA* vss. 1.4, 1.17, 8.6, 8.40 and 9.2 which we discussed in chapter 8 above. He also points out an important pattern we did not note in chapter 8 above. Each of the verses in *AA* chapter 8 which introduces a Buddha *kāya* characteristically identifies it as the "*kāya* of the *muni*" (the "body of the Sage"). Thus *AA* vs. 8.1 describes what it calls the "*svābhāvikakāya* of the *muni*," vs. 8.12 describes the "*sāmbhogikakāya* of the *muni*," and vs. 8.33 describes the "*nairmāṇikakāya* of the *muni*." If vs. 8.6's mention of "*dharmakāya*" was intended to name a fourth *kāya*, it should have followed the same pattern and referred to that fourth *kāya* as the "*dharmakāya* of the *muni*." Go ram pa's reading of the *AA* was based only on the Tibetan translation. Yet, for the most part, it was extremely rigorous and precise and therefore issued in accurate conclusions.

light. Since, as we noted in chapters 7 and 8 above, the *AA's* buddhology did indeed derive from other Mahāyāna textual traditions of its time, Go ram pa arrived at a more accurate analysis of its meaning than Tsong kha pa could.

Furthermore, Tsong kha pa's philological analysis of *AA* 8 was predisposed toward Haribhadra's peculiar interpretations, and therefore ignored most of the philological evidence which could have tipped him off to the fact that the *AA* was indeed a three *kāya* text. Go ram pa, performing his own philological analysis of *AA* 8 with reference to the entire structure of the text, unfettered by Haribhadra's peculiar interpretations, freely took note of the many pieces of evidence which support a three *kāya* interpretation. In short, Go ram pa arrived at a more accurate interpretation of *AA* 8 than Tsong kha pa because his methods, at least in this particular case, were both historically and philologically sounder.

Like the buddhology of all the earlier scholars we have discussed, Go ram pa's buddhology was intimately related to his gnoseology. As we saw above, Tsong kha pa had accepted four Buddha *kāyas* in part because he theorized that a Buddha's awareness per se distinguished conventional truth from ultimate truth, while cognizing both simultaneously and directly. To Tsong kha pa, this logically implied a fourth *kāya* (*jñānadharmakāya*), since Buddha's undefiled dharmas as conventional phenomena would be distinguished from their emptiness in Buddha's own awareness, comprising a conventional *kāya* which is an object of Buddhas alone (while *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are posited by being

conventional objects of *ārya bodhisattvas* and others). Go ram pa, on the other hand, strongly reaffirmed the tri-*kāya* buddhology of Mahāyāna Buddhism prior to Haribhadra, in part because his understanding of a Buddha's gnosis conformed more closely than Tsong kha pa's to that of earlier tri-*kāya* proponents such as Candrakīrti, Ārya Vimuktisena and the authors of the *MSA*, *Msg*, *RGV*, etc. and their commentaries.

Like Tsong kha pa before him, Go ram pa discusses Buddha's gnosis mainly in his commentary on the *buddhabhūmi* section of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*. Go ram pa's commentary is called the *lTa ba ngan sel*. Whereas Tsong kha pa's theory of Buddha's gnosis owed much to his own inferential speculation and prominent reference to Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayavibhaṅga* (*dGongs pa rab gsal*, pp. 458-461), Go ram pa derived his gnoseological theory more directly from Candrakīrti's own text, understood in its literal sense (*lTa ba ngan sel*, fols. 109a6-110b3). As noted in chapter 9, sec. 2 above, Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (*buddhabhūmi* section, vs. 2 and autocommentary) explains a Buddha's omniscience as a comprehension in which all phenomena are known "in one taste" through Buddha's non-dual gnosis of the one ultimate nature they all share, "thatness" (*tattvam*, *de kho na nyid*). In other words, according to Candrakīrti, a Buddha's knowledge of the phenomenal world is all-encompassing precisely because it is an expression of his knowledge of the pervasive, undivided ultimate nature of that world. Candrakīrti's gnoseology of buddhahood, like that of Ārya Vimuktisena and the formulators of the three *kāya* theory, made Buddha's non-dual knowledge of ultimate truth his fundamental knowledge, upon which all his

knowledge was based (see chapter 5, sec. 4; chapter 9, sec. 2; chapter 10, sec. 3 on Amano, 1983, fols. 25a4-25a6; Poussin's Tibetan edition of *Madhyamakāvatāra*, pp. 356-362).

Go ram pa follows Candrakīrti very closely in this, and therefore criticizes Tsong kha pa's speculative theory of Buddha's gnosis. According to Tsong kha pa's theory, a Buddha's knowledges of conventional truth and of ultimate truth are both direct and equally fundamental. A Buddha's knowledge of conventional truth is not merely an expression of his knowledge of ultimate truth. A Buddha cognizes conventional truth dualistically (with subject and object of perception appearing as separate) and ultimate truth non-dualistically (with no separation between subject and object). Thus, according to Tsong kha pa, a Buddha doesn't cognize conventional truth through his cognition of ultimate truth; rather he cognizes conventional truth qua conventional truth and ultimate truth qua ultimate truth, simultaneously and directly. As noted in the previous section, then, Tsong kha pa implicitly granted to conventional truth per se (as *pratītyasamutpāda*) an ontological status equal to ultimate truth, since both are equally validated by Buddha's direct knowledge, and a Buddha is understood to know all as it exists (*dGongs pa rab gsal*, pp. 458-461).

Go ram pa severely criticizes Tsong kha pa for departing from Candrakīrti's text in a way that would make Buddha's gnosis a simple contradiction. Go ram pa asks Tsong kha pa how one mind (a Buddha's) can simultaneously see things both dualistically and non-dualistically? If a Buddha sees conventional truth as a separate entity from his own

awareness, but sees ultimate truth as one entity with his own awareness, then he must see conventional truth as a separate entity from ultimate truth. In that case, ultimate truth would not be the ultimate nature of conventional truth, as Tsong kha pa accepts, but a separate entity altogether. Go ram pa raises many other arguments against Tsong kha pa's theory, but this is a particularly powerful one.[33]

Go ram pa attempts, in his theory of Buddha's gnosis, to follow Candrakīrti's text very closely. He interprets Candrakīrti to be saying that a Buddha's knowledge comprehends all phenomena through the "one taste" of the *dharmadhātu*, i.e. through the one ultimate nature they all share. From the perspective of a Buddha's gnosis, ultimate truth, conventional truth, and the gnosis itself are all cognized non-dually, inseparably, in one taste. It is only the discursive thought of the trainees which divides a Buddha's gnosis into separate knowledges of ultimate and conventional truth. Thus, the entire phenomenal world conceptually constructed dualistically by sentient beings is fully known by a Buddha, but not in such a way that its dualistic appearance is validated as real within his own perspective. Rather, he knows it all through his non-dual knowledge of the *dharmadhātu* which pervades all. In Go ram pa's view, the dualistic conventional world of sentient beings is the product of their own conceptual construction (based on their own *karma* and *kleśa*), not Buddha's. Buddha's knowledge of the sentient being's dualistic world must be through his knowledge of its ultimate nature, not through his own

33 *lTa ba ngan sel*, fols. 107a6-109a1.

conceptual construction of such a world. Therefore, following Candrakīrti's expression, Go ram pa says that a Buddha's gnosis knows all conventional phenomena, but knows them in a non-dualistic manner (with no separation between subject and object of cognition) and without any appearance of temporality, since he knows all through the non-arising and non-ceasing *dharmadhātu*. Acknowledging that this is difficult to explain further, Gor ram pa concludes that, in the final analysis, Buddha's gnosis can only be described broadly (as he has) by relying upon the authoritative textual traditions which describe buddhahood (the textual traditions of the "Maitreya" texts such as the *RGV*, *MSA*, etc., and the great Mādhyamikas such as Candrakīrti, which ultimately derive from yogic experience). Precisely how a Buddha cognizes can not be determined by inferences such as Tsong kha pa's which extrapolate from the logical and epistemological categories of non-Buddhas.[34]

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34 *lTa ba ngan sel*, fols. 109a6-110b3: "*gzhung 'dir* (Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Poussin, p. 356)/ *ro mnyam nyid du yang dag thugs su chud par mdzad gyur nas/ mkhyen bzang khyod kyis skad cig gis ni shes bya thugs su chud/ ces te/ shes bya'i sgrib pa phra zhing phra ba spangs pa'i skad cig ma gcig la ye shes skad cig ma gcig gis chos thams cad chos kyi dbyings su ro gcig par rtogs pa'i tshe ye she de'i ngor ji lta ba dang/ ji snyed pa dang/ yul can ye shes gsum po ngo bo tha dad du mi snang la/ de'i rjes su mnyam bzhag de las langs pa yang mi srid de/ thugs mnyam par ma bzhag pa mi mnga ba sangs rgyas kyi thun mong ma yin pa'i yon tan du gsungs pa'i phyir dang/ de nas bzung ste ye she de'i ngor dus snga phyi'i dbye ba yang med pa'i phyir te skye 'gag mi snang ba'i phyir ro/ de gsum dbyer med ro gcig tu rtogs pa la gdul bya'i ngor ldog pa'i sgo nas cha shas phye na ji lta ba rtogs pa'i cha nas mnyam bzhag dang/ ji snyed pa rtogs pa'i cha nas rjes thob dang/ ye shes de nyid rtogs pa'i cha nas so so rang rig pa zhes pa'i tha snyad 'jog la/ ngo bo tha dad pa med par ma zad rtogs tshul tha dad pa tsam yang med do/ des na chos nyid ji lta ba rtogs kyang chos can ji snyed pa'i dbye ba ma 'dres pa so sor rtog pa'i cha nas 'phags pa 'og ma'i mnyam bzhag las khyad par 'phags/ chos can ji snyed pa snang yang skye 'gag tu mi snang ba dang/ gnyis snang med pa'i cha nas 'phags pa 'og ma'i rjes thob las khyad par du 'phags te/ gzhung lugs tshad ldan gyi bshad tshul la brten nas/ 'di tsam zhig smra bar nus kyi des yul rtogs tshul ji lta ba zhin so so skye bos bsam par ga la nus/...."*

Where Buddha's gnosis knows all in one taste with the *dharmadhātu* (universal emptiness), there can be no differentiation within Buddha's own awareness per se. Buddha's indivisible gnostic realization, again, as the ontological essence of buddhahood, can only be posited as one, undifferentiated *kāya*: the *dharmakāya* (also called "*svābhāvikakāya*"), while *sāmbhogikakāya* and *nairmāṇikakāya* are the appearances it manifests to others. For Go ram pa, then, just as for Candrakīrti, Ārya Vimuktisena, Abhayākaragupta, and for the early Yogācāra *śāstrakāras*, the non-dual gnoseology of Mahāyāna naturally issues in a tri-*kāya* scheme of buddhology.

Go ram pa's gnoseology and buddhology accorded better than Tsong kha pa's with the main Mahāyāna textual traditions prior to Haribhadra. However, it left some fundamental questions unanswered which Tsong kha pa had specifically tried to address. How can an unconditioned *svābhāvikakāya/dharmakāya* be the cause of manifestation and activity in the conditioned world? And how can a Buddha cognize precisely and individually all conventional phenomena (which are conceptually constructed and differentiated by sentient beings) entirely through the "one taste" of the *dharmadhātu* (the universal emptiness of all such phenomena)? If this means (as Go ram pa claimed) that conventional phenomena qua phenomena do not appear to a Buddha (i.e. that all appears only in "one taste" with the *dharmadhātu*), then in what sense does a Buddha know conventionalities at all? He would not see, for example, the house that we see, composed of different bricks and boards, since all that he sees is one with the undifferentiated *dharmadhātu*. But if

a Buddha does not even know the conventionalities we all see, it would make no sense for so many authoritative Buddhist texts to call him "omniscient." Or, if a Buddha is held to be omniscient, the fact that he does not know the conventional world we inhabit would imply that it simply does not exist. Then there would be no ontological basis for moral conduct or spiritual practise of any kind, and Mahāyāna metaphysics would collapse into a form of nihilism. These are the sort of problems which Tsong kha pa had attempted to address.

In fairness to Go ram pa, however, these are not just problems raised by his theory, but problems inherent in the basic Mahāyāna formulations of gnoseology and buddhology prior to Haribhadra which Go ram pa defended. And it is questionable whether Tsong kha pa's attempt to solve such problems was successful. Go ram pa's criticism of Tsong kha pa above is powerful. And in Tsong kha pa's theory lies the implication (whether or not intended) that the conceptual construction of conventional truth, which traditional Mahāyāna metaphysics said a Buddha had passed beyond, now became a property of a Buddha's own realization. For Tsong kha pa had posited a fourth *kāya* precisely because he believed a Buddha distinguished the conventional and ultimate aspects of his own realization, and such a distinction can only be made by conceptual thought. Furthermore, for Tsong kha pa, a Buddha's knowledge of both conventional and ultimate truth was equally fundamental and direct, implicitly granting both truths an equal ontological status (see section 2 above). This does not fully accord with the fundamental textual traditions of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism prior to Haribhadra (discussed in chapters

4-9 above), according to which a Buddha's gnosis of ultimate truth (the *dharmadhātu*, etc.) was clearly the fundamental knowledge upon which all the rest of a Buddha's knowledge and activity within the phenomenal world was based. In those textual traditions, as we have seen, a Buddha's realization per se inhabited the realm of ultimate truth, enabling him to operate pervasively within a realm of conventional truth conceptually constructed by sentient beings, not by himself. This meant that in the main Mahāyāna textual traditions prior to Haribhadra, conventional truth per se was not granted (even implicitly) the sort of ontological status which Tsong kha pa implicitly gave to it through his buddhology.

In the end, the debate over three vs. four *kāyas* stemmed from the philosophical problems that lay implicit in the fundamental Mahāyāna theory of non-abiding *nirvāṇa* (*apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*, discussed in chapter 5 above). For in Abhidharma theory, an *arhat* who passed into *parinirvāṇa* (upon physical death) passed entirely beyond the conditioned world. He was simply no longer a part of it. But in the Mahāyāna conception of non-abiding *nirvāṇa*, even though a Buddha passed beyond the conditioned world into an eternal, non-dual realization of the unconditioned (*śūnyatā*), he still had to be pervasively active within the conditioned world. It is hard to understand precisely how this can be so. The formative buddhological traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism said as much, declaring buddhahood literally inconceivable. Perhaps, as Go ram pa reaffirmed, it is wisest to accept their word on that.

# ABBREVIATIONS

Pk = Peking edition of the Tibetan Tripitika. Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, Tokyo-kyoto, 1956.

sDe dge = sDe dge edition of the Tibetan Tripitika. Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, 1979-1980.

*AA* = *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*

*DDV* = *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*

*Kośa* = *Abhidharmakośa*

*MAV* = *Madhyāntavibhāga*

*MSA* = *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*

*Msg* = *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*

*PP* = *Prajñāpāramitā*

*RGV* = *Ratnagotravibhāga*

*rP* = Revised edition of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*,

*Vṛttibhāṣya* = *Sūtrālaṃkāravṛttibhāṣya*

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Wogihara, U. See *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-Āloka* above.

# VITA SHEET

**Title of thesis** Controversy Over Dharmakāya in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: An Historical-critical Analysis of Abhisamayālaṃkāra Chapter 8 and its Commentaries in Relation to the Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra and the Yogācāra Tradition

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